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OR
THE DUNCE OF THE FAMILY.

BY
CHARLES CLARKE



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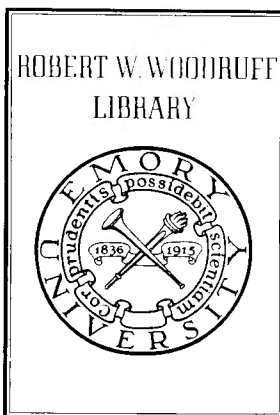
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CHARLIE THORNHILL ;

OR,

THE DUNCE OF THE FAMILY.

A Novel.

BY

CHARLES CLARKE,

AUTHOR OF

"BOX FOR THE SEASON," "CRUMBS FROM A SPORTSMAN'S TABLE."

FIFTH EDITION.

LONDON:

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CHARLIE THORNHILL.

CHAPTER I.

"Hearken to me, gentlemen,
Come and you shall heare,
I'll tell you of two of the boldest brethren,
That ever borne y-were."—*Ballad Poetry.*

It was a beautiful evening about the middle of spring; and as the sun was approaching gradually the horizon, a small pleasure-boat containing two persons pulled into a creek on the river Lee, a mile or two from Cork. Half a dozen rude steps led through a rustic gate to a very small but neatly kept lawn. The neatness of the place was remarkable, as neither the size of the house nor the garden justified such anticipations. It seemed not so much an evidence of means as of a refinement superior to that of those around, whose cottages, with greater extent, had generally an unkept and neglected look, and bespoke as much an indifference to comfort as an incapability of acquiring it. The cottage itself was utterly without pretension. It consisted apparently of about four small rooms, exclusive of servants' offices; a verandah, looking to the east and south, gave an ornamental appearance to the building; and a few creepers, already putting forth their earliest leaves, added a certain amount of character to the house, which it otherwise would have wanted. It was very retired; in the semi-obscurity of a setting sun it was almost *triste*; and the deep shadows upon the little lawn impressed the superstitious with a feeling of melancholy, not always displeasing, nor very un-Irish.

The persons who had just disembarked from the boat were (as might have been supposed) a man and a woman. For the development of mystery this union of sexes is indispensable. The strong arm and stubborn will of man require the passionate

earnestness of woman to assist or to thwart him. The woman had moved a few steps on to the lawn, or rather grass-plot, and now stopped, watching her companion, as he fastened the boat sufficiently to secure her from drifting down the stream. They were both eminently handsome, and still young, though not in their *première jeunesse*. The woman was about seven-and-twenty, of very delicate and lady-like proportions. Her face, as a mere question of feature, was sufficiently beautiful, but its charms were enhanced by an expression which told of love, of fidelity in suffering, of truthfulness, of dependence, of everything most womanlike. It told, too, of anxiety, but not for self—of care for others deeper than for any suffering of her own. The man, who by this time had joined her, was also a very handsome person: less strictly so than the woman, perhaps, in feature. He was, besides, considerably older, though still an upright, active, and well-made man. He had the appearance, essentially, of a gentleman; but he had a restless, unsettled gaze, and a face in which there was written in a strong hand—impulse, sensuality, self-will. There was no command either of self or others in those handsome large dark eyes, or in that full lip and ruddy complexion. But as he stood by his wife (for such was their relationship), they moved a noble couple; and few would have remarked these physiognomical defects upon a first inspection. He was dressed in a sombrero, and a pilot coat, which he had just put on, and which he buttoned as he leisurcly approached his companion.

“Oh! Arthur, Arthur, how happy we might be here but for these wretched separations; and if not here, elsewhere; all places are the same to me, if you could only be as you once were, and with me and the boy.”

“Better perhaps as it is, Norah.”

“No! impossible. Whatever the sorrow, whatever the mystery, surely it may be better borne when shared with your wife.”

“You would only be teased by the daily annoyance of my difficulties, and could never relieve them.”

“Try me, Arthur. For what did I marry you? Was it because you were rich; because you promised me a great house and many luxuries? Did ye come courting like a fine gentleman, when ye cantered over on your ragged-looking pony,” said Norah, with a touch of humour, in spite of her anxieties; “and in the old shooting-jacket that Mike begged to frighten

away the birds? It wasn't till the day you were married I knew you'd a decent coat to your back."

"You married me because you loved me; and it would have been better that you had been buried first," said the man, bitterly. "It's no use, Norah; don't ask me; I can tell you nothing, except this, that I must leave you again for England. Be a good girl, and take care of yourself and the boy. Some day we'll try and leave this place and every sorrow behind us; but it can't be yet. What does the boy do with himself all day?"

"He goes to school in the morning, and seems to be getting on well; but I hardly know much of his schoolfellows. He is usually fishing all the afternoon; and is always teasing to know when he's to have the pony you have so long talked about."

"Let him fish, Norah; it's an innocent amusement, as long as he does not fall into the river: but keep him away from horseflesh; the less he ever knows of it the better; it's been very little good to me. But now I must go to meet Burke. I have a word of business to say to him to-night."

"Well! don't be long. But don't bring Burke here; I've seen him once, and I don't like him. Arthur, dear Arthur, these men frighten me; they are at the bottom of all our sorrow and mystery; trust me, and confide in me. If I can do nothing else for you, I can pray for you, or die for you, but I cannot leave you."

Whilst Arthur Kildonald unfastens his skiff, and rows across the river to his rendezvous, I will endeavour to place him before the reader in his true light. He was the son of a man of small but independent property in the west of Ireland, who without influence or position was too much of a gentleman to work for his bread. There are more such in many parts of Ireland, east, west, north, and south. He had, as a boy, but a very moderate education, but he had the advantage, if it may be so called, of a close proximity to a garrison town; and his father's idle habits and congenial disposition brought him into continual intercourse with the officers. Arthur grew up singularly handsome, and with all those tastes for riding and shooting, and every sort of sport, for which his physical powers and activity so well fitted him. At an early age he was an adept at all games of skill, as of chance. His dexterity as a pigeon-shot found him no unwelcome supplies of pocket-money; and his horsemanship procured him many a good mount in amateur steeple-chases, by which he acquired something more useful to him than reputation.

It is difficult to conceive a course of life more fitted to eradicate all good, and to sow the seeds of much evil. A naturally good disposition soon gave way to the contaminating influences of self-indulgence and gambling. Very little remained to him at the age of five-and-twenty but a questionable recklessness in money matters, which was occasionally mistaken for generosity, and a certain softness of character which rendered him the prey of designing women and men. With the former he was supposed to have had some successes—an idea which his vanity encouraged. With the latter he was always either a tool or a hero. He had much personal courage; and constant admixture with the world had given him a readiness which served him in moments of danger or difficulty.

His father's death opened the realities of life to him. Up to that period he had been entirely ignorant of his social position. He awoke to find himself an orphan, which gave him little trouble, and a beggar, which was a crushing evil. Hitherto he had not felt the want of money; now and henceforth his life was to be a struggle with the world. It so happened that the small property, of which his father may have been rather said to have received the rents than to have been in possession, eventually came to the hammer; and was bought by Mr. Thornhill, of Thornhills, an English gentleman of large fortune, at a price which just served to pay off the mortgages upon it, a few personal debts, and to provide funds for his funeral, which fortunately happened at no great distance of time. With a blindness peculiar to men of violent impulses, Arthur Kildonald could never divest himself of the notion that a great wrong had been done him by the Thornhill family; and though at that time they were quite unknown to him, he cherished a most foolish, almost frantic, antipathy to them all. The name of Thornhill stank in his nostrils; and a savage longing even then possessed him of some day wiping out an imaginary stain upon his position in society. From that time he led a life of dissipation, supported upon the small remnants of his property, or by the association which he formed with gamblers of every degree, and more especially upon the turf. His connexion with these men led him frequently to England. Indeed, for several years he had lived at least eight months out of the twelve in that country; and a charming manner and congenial pursuits gave him an *entrée* into at least the confines of good men's society. I say men's society—for when I hear of acquaintance-

ship formed under any circumstances but those of perfect social equality, I always inquire whether it extends to the ladies of the family. English sporting men are remarkably *inexigéant* as regards men, but they are very particular that the female apartments are invaded by no unacknowledged foot. In England he was known only as an unmarried man; in Ireland his marriage was suspected by all, who did not give him credit for a *liaison* of a very romantic nature.

Such had been, and still was, the man who now moored his skiff on the left bank of the Lee, a short way lower down the stream than his own house, and on the opposite side of the river. He stepped lightly on shore, lit a cigar, and walked leisurely inland towards a small inn, which he quickly recognised by a horn lantern, swinging inside of the door, and shedding its dim lustre over a circuit of a few hundred yards.

"Is Mr. Burke here, Patrick?"

"Is it Lawyer Burke, him as rides the bay cob; yer honour?"

"The same, and a very handsome cob it is," said Kildonald; "a little light below the knee, but a fine mover: how long has he been here?"

"He's taken his first tumbler, and maybe he'll be wanting a second by this time. Will I hould a light to yer honour?" said Patrick, as he preceded Kildonald to a small but tolerably comfortable little room, where there was a small turf fire, and Mr. Burke was enjoying a good hot glass of whisky punch, which had been brought to him upon his arrival, some ten minutes before.

Patrick busied himself for a minute or two about the fire, and then looked at the tumbler, and then at the little kettle, whilst the two gentlemen saluted each other in the customary manner of men who meet pretty frequently, but without great love for one another. As soon, however, as the door closed, Burke, drawing his chair closer to Kildonald, asked somewhat abruptly—

"You got my letter, I suppose?"

"I did."

"Can nothing be done?"

"Nothing in this case; the horse must win if all goes right; he's a stone better than the mare, and there's nothing else worth mentioning in the race."

"By G— he must not win! it's absolute ruin;" and Burke moved uneasily on his chair. "Listen, Kildonald; he belongs to Sir Frederick Marston; can money do nothing with his trainer. Is he to be got at?"

"Simply absurd. Where we can give hundreds he can give thousands. Besides, I know the man, and nothing of that kind can save you. You must stand to be shot at."

"I tell you every man has his price; faith he was no fool that discovered that!"

"And I tell you that Turner has not his price; if he has it's beyond your purse and mine; he's the honestest trainer in England."

"Ye might have added Ireland too, and not made it a great compliment anyhow," said Mr. Burke, whose own experience was not of the most encouraging. "Who rides him?"

"It is not known: it's a gentlemen's race, and will be run on its merits."

"A gentlemen's race! Come, Captain, there's hope yet. They're worse than the jockeys, and a great deal poorer. Are you up?"

"Not yet. But I go to England to-morrow, and know nothing till then. Lord Castleton might have the mount, but can't ride the weight."

"Can you? You've ridden Sir Frederick's horses before this: if you can manage this you may stand two thousand to nothing on it. If not—the game's over, and once over with me, you know what follows."

"Enough, enough, sir; I have submitted to these threats too frequently not to know what is coming." At the conclusion of Burke's speech Kildonald had risen quickly from the seat he had hitherto occupied. His breath came rapidly, his voice quivered with passion, and his face wore a paleness terrible to contemplate: it had in it a shade of fear, which in a constitutionally brave man bespeaks an inability of action more sickening than any outburst of rage. A lion before the braying of an ass is said to stand cowed, or to crouch trembling at the unearthly sound; and a man of physical power in the meshes of his own vices is an object equally pitiful. Indeed, when he recovered his usual speech his words lacked that hearty ring which real passion lends, and sent forth an uncertain sound tinged by some motive of feeling undefined. "I have said it is impossible; is my position to go for nothing? Am I to be insulted by proposals which cannot be made with safety to the meanest of your confederates? I am in your power, but I will not be reminded of it every time your accursed avarice makes me an unwilling tool in hands that I despise. You—you—you forget who I am."

Burke, too, had risen, and the fancied advantages of birth and the real advantages of manner and appearance were very obvious. Burke was a broad-shouldered and singularly vulgar-looking man; his head was large, his features coarse, and a profusion of red hair and whisker gave him a *farouche* appearance. Low cunning was the predominant expression of his face, but it was mixed with a roistering air, which sat not badly on one whose avocation, to all appearance, was that of a middle-class horse-dealer. He was really a sporting lawyer.

"Faith, Mr. Kildonald, I'll not forget *what* ye are." And here Burke paused, for he was not sure how far he might drive his confederate to defy him, and to break a bond which, from too frequent irritation, was becoming intolerable. His cunning was not the *finesse* which plays with the emotions of men, as with facts, or he might have read, in his companion's face or manner, capitulation upon any terms. "However, it's impossible, is it? I'd like to see the thing on the cards that's impossible with you and me. And I've a heavy book on The Leger, too; and if Sir Frederick's horse wins this I'll never see it out. Seven thousand to Thornhill alone, and ——"

"Hold," said Kildonald; "did you say Thornhill? Has he much money on? Quick, man; has he backed Sir Frederick's horse for a stake? Tell me at once." And such was his vehemence that Burke could not help seeing that his point was gained, and for some reason or other Thornhill's fancy would prove his safeguard; so he replied without much hesitation, and with quite as little truth, that he had backed the horse heavily for The Aristocratic Handicap, and must be very short of money if the grey lost for some time to come. In fact, with a tact which did him credit, although not knowing the extent or power of the feeling, he put a finishing touch to his last *coup* by asserting that the Irish property must be in the market before long, unless there came a slice of luck, which could only happen through the success of the gentlemen whom Thornhill's *esprit de corps* induced him always to back. "Ah! they all sink or swim together, and they all back their fancy; and when once a man has a prejudice, and will back it, it doesn't take long to land him: they're soon high and dry after that."

The passions which had been roused in Kildonald, partly by the sense of indignity and dependence, and partly by his fears, were beginning to cool. Not so his hatred of Burke. But at the present moment his thoughts had been most opportunely

directed into a new channel. He had two objects in view, both of which seemed once more within his grasp. The one uppermost in his mind was an opportunity of escape from his present position, which he imagined a safe retreat on the Continent would give him ; the other was an opportunity of revenging himself upon the family whom he unjustly regarded as his oppressors and the usurpers of his birthright. Another motive urged him, of a less interested nature, though not equally powerful, the withdrawal of his wife and children, especially of his boy, from scenes which his natural and acquired refinement showed him to be demoralizing and dangerous. However unprincipled in the main, unless utterly worthless, there are few men unactuated by a sense of affection for those dependent upon them. Kildonald was well content to pass his life, or a great portion of it, in pleasures which could not be shared with Norah and her children. The excitement of the gaming-table, the luxuries of the clubs, and the society of men and women of questionable character, above all, the fashionable vices in which he indulged, could never have existed for him as a married man. He knew that the moment he should become hampered by domestic ties, the life he had so long led, and to which he was so much attached, would be closed to him. Men were satisfied with a polished exterior and a capacity for congenial pursuits which his straitened circumstances and fluctuating fortunes could never have commanded had he once exhibited himself in another character in London. Arthur Kildonald, a loungeur, a club man, a fine, but not successful whist-player, the best gentleman jockey of his day, and a constant *habitué* of every race-course in England, was sufficiently *recherché* to pass with men for what he seemed to be, without any close questioning as to what he had been. There was not one of his associates who cared, indeed, to know more of him than that he had a bowing acquaintance with most good men in town ; and if whispers had ever been heard as to his stability, or his claim to the position he thus held, they had never been raised beyond a whisper, or interested any one further than to close the doors of certain *salons* against his reception. He was not affected by it. He never sought greater intimacy in any house than such as answered his own purposes. He read with indifference "The Morning Post" accounts of festivities into which he cared not to intrude ; and when the season was over, he was well satisfied to forego the pleasures of a country house, and the moors or

stubbles, for the charms of Baden or Homburg, whence he usually returned to Mount Donald, as he called his cottage on the Lee, to share his good or bad fortune with his family. Thoroughly selfish, thoroughly unprincipled, this may still be said for him—that, when within the influence of Norah and his children, he was kind and affectionate, and cherished intentions enough to have paved Cork, in addition to a place which is said to be pretty well paved already. It is useless to attempt to analyse such feelings; some have suggested one motive principle, some another: the majority of philosophers have made it arise from self-love in the power inherent in the protective faculty. In the present case it was, like the loadstone, strong enough, but it required to be brought within the focus of magnetic attraction.

But Kildonald had seen enough of men, and of Englishmen especially, to know that, whatever his present position amongst them, a small house in a suburb, or lodgings in a less inhabitable *quartier*, a cold shoulder of mutton, weekly bills undischarged, and a wife, however charming, if badly dressed, were things not likely to enhance his own value in the eyes of his present companions; and he took care, whether honourably or wisely, or not, to run no risk of losing caste by any such *escapade*. The ground he stood upon was not perhaps the best soil, but, such as it was, it answered his purpose, and he stuck to it. His business was to live: and to live at other people's expense. The world was his oyster; and if he opened it with a roughish knife, and sometimes cut his fingers, he managed to extract the morsel. With these thoughts, and such as these, passing through his mind, he resumed his seat with an eager and irritable look, and with a fixed determination to go through the disagreeable ordeal which awaited him.

Had his confederate been a gentleman (for confederates they were to a certain extent), he would have felt but few qualms. But the grossness and vulgarity with which Burke proposed a robbery took from its charms, and left but little margin for the imagination.

"Can ye ride the horse?" said he, when affairs had once more settled into business. "Will Sir Frederick give ye the mount?"

"He will," answered the other, laconically.

"And can he win as he likes?"

"Or lose, I suppose you mean."

"Perhaps I do."

"Then why not say so? there's no necessity for any delicacy about the matter, unless ye think Patrick's, maybe, at the key-hole."

"If he is he'll catch nothing but a cold in the eye. It's mighty little he'll learn from your conversation, anyhow;" and as the whisky warmed Mr. Burke, he became more Irish than usual.

"And what's to prevent me winning, and landing a stake worth double of your paltry offer?"

"Because winning is never a certainty, and it wouldn't suit us to do so. Besides, they'll be scarce that 'ud lay ye two thousand to nothing about it, either way."

"It's dangerous, but I can do it," said Kildonald, thoughtfully.

"Indeed ye can; there isn't such a horseman this side of Kildare, nor the other, for the matter o' that. Make it a certainty, and say three thousand to nothing."

"It is a certainty." And without another word he quitted the room, leaving his friend to digest his whisky-and-water and the chances of "a certainty" together.

CHAPTER II.

THE BATTLE.

"And like the impatient steed of war,
He snuff'd the battle from afar."—*Marmion*.

"Go it, Charlie, keep your head up: by Jove, that's a finisher!" said Bob Wilkinson, the cock of the school, as the baker's boy dropped to a well-delivered left-hander of his opponent. "Beautifully done! You must win now; about two more rounds will settle it," added he, as he pulled back Charlie to his second's knee. "Here, give us the sponge, and carry the pail over to the baker; fair play's a jewel, you know;" saying which he threw the damp sponge at the baker's backers, and dismissed a little fellow with a stable pail to the opposition party, who certainly looked in want of it.

"I hope old Gresham won't turn up before the finish; what a row there'll be if he finds it out," said a dark-eyed young

Pickle, who seemed quite as much alive to the fun as to the danger of the master's arrival. "Another five minutes and we shall win, and we'll give Thornhill a jolly feed at old Mother Tucker's, after second school to-morrow."

"The Doctor is all safe at private lesson, and there's Humphreys minor looking out for Willis, at the bottom of the school lane—he's always sneaking. Now then, time's up, you fellows, give him room: eighteenpence to sixpence Charlie licks him this round." This liberal offer, which was not responded to, was made by a very sporting-looking young gentleman, with a short stick, and a hat considerably the worse for wear. His name was Stebbing; he was the great sporting authority of the school, and took manifest interest in the present contest.

"Don't let him close, Charlie—keep well away; well stopped," said his second, as the baker made a vigorous but ineffectual attempt at a rally: "now go in;" and Charlie Thornhill—for it was he—with a coolness that would have done honour to Mr. Sayers, finding the baker a little short of wind after his last effort, followed him up and terminated the round by a "one, two, three," of so scientific a character, that young Muffins, as he was politely called, failed to come to time: and the Dunce of the Family was hailed the victor, amidst the cheers of his school-fellows, and the sad disappointment of the "cads."

The fight had taken place on a greensward, close by the side of the river, and within no great distance of the school. It was a public thoroughfare, used alike by the Doctor's boys for the purpose of walking or boating, and by the townspeople as a short cut to a more distant part of the parish. It is not surprising that it gave rise to an occasional squabble between the two, which ended not unfrequently in a fight, as in the present case, when two young gentlemen met, whose vanity or obstinacy lay in that direction. When there is a determination to bring affairs to a crisis, there is never any difficulty in finding a reasonable cause; and the politest or quietest man in the world usually has a weak point, if you only know where to find it. There can be no particular pleasure in walking in close proximity to a very dirty wall, abutting on some still more filthy buildings, in preference to about fifty yards of greensward, which ran between it and the river. Yet this was the particular fancy of these young gentlemen; and on that account an honour coveted particularly by the boys of the town. It was certainly mortifying enough that the blood of a Howard, or the

bone of a less aristocratic scion of the banking or brewing interest, should have to yield to the superior weight of young Muffins, Slaughter, or Codfish, as the case might be, backed by a turbulent crowd of young cordwainers, leathersellers, and publicans, only bent upon "smashing the swells," as they were pleased to call the little aristocrats of one of the most celebrated schools of its day. But when insult was added to injury, in half a dozen inexplicable ways, only conceivable to the school-boy mind, what wonder that, regardless of odds, scarcely a week passed without either a single combat, on such approved rules of fistic etiquette, as to remind us of Holingshed's "Chronicles," and the Mowbrays and Norfolks of former ages; or such a general *mêlée* as to rival the celebrated battle of Brenville itself. The credit of Dr. Gresham was almost at stake, so constant and direful had these conflicts become. A black eye was the normal condition of one half of the school, at least; and a poor glazier in the suburbs, gained a very handsome livelihood by his skill in making black white, "in painting the lily, in colouring the rose," and in a knowledge of flesh tints, which might have been a lesson to Etty himself.

The present was one of these charming little affairs, in which nobody seemed to know which was the aggressor. As far as the account had yet proceeded, it appears that young Cadwallader, a Welshman of high descent and small of person, had attempted to secure the much-desired wall, at the no small risk of being poisoned on the one hand, or squeezed to death on the other. A baker's boy, not unknown to fame amongst his compatriots as a great patron of the noble science, and constantly engaged in strife, asserted his right, as a representative for the borough interests. Being twice as strong, and considerably older, he was not long in setting aside Cadwallader and his claims, and nearly smothering him into the bargain, with his basket, from which he had been delivering bread, in one of the but little fashionable *quartiers* of the town. But punishment overtakes the unjust man, and sometimes with no slow foot. At a sudden turning in the wall about a dozen of the Doctor's boys beheld the unequal contest, on their way to their boat; and the baker was taken red-handed. Charlie Thornhill was in advance of his schoolfellows by about twenty yards; there appeared to be a short and decisive parley, an exchange of some elegant language, not altogether parliamentary, and a very decisive blow from Thornhill, which settled the question of the

wall by almost knocking the baker into it. He was certainly taken a little aback by the vigorous energy of the blow ; but we have heard that much is fair in love and war which would not obtain under ordinary circumstances. The first blow is a great point gained. All I advise is, that it be strong enough. It is a rule of very ancient standing that you should first make up your mind whether you mean fighting or not, and then put as much energy as possible into your attack. We must do the English the justice to say, that fair play is their characteristic ; and no sooner was it clear that the matter was to be decided by force of arms, than a ring was made, and Muffins received the same kindly and delicate attentions as Charlie himself—of course not with quite the same feeling. However, a few minutes served to bring down a host of the baker's friends, and the battle proceeded with a charming regularity, up to the time when we introduced our readers to the scene.

The baker was far the superior in size and strength ; but he had neither the condition nor the science of Charlie. He fought well and lustily for three-quarters of an hour ; was defeated at every point ; and when his face was like an unbaked apple dumpling, and his opponent looked nearly as fresh as when the battle began, he took the advice of his backer, one-eyed Joey, a celebrated dog's-meat man, and retired from the contest, knocked completely out of time.

"Here, Charlie, put on your coat, and make haste, old fellow ; we'll go down the back way over the wall : if any of the masters see us, they'll be sure to know there's been a row ; and old Gresham swears he'll flog the next fellow he catches fighting with the cads." So Charlie, not a little elated with his victory, and with the muscles of his face already beginning to stiffen, but with no extraordinary marks of punishment about him, began deliberately to put on his waistcoat and his coat, and to put himself into such a condition as to attract as little attention as possible—which has not been the usual characteristic of conquerors from Alexander the Great down to Napoleon the Third. Charlie did most things with deliberation, and through life it left him fewer things to undo.

"Don't you think he had better go to Payne's, and have a coat of paint on that left eye?" said Reginald Glanville, who considered personal appearance before all other things ; and being a chum of Thornhill's was not anxious to be deprived of his little *protégé* even for a week. "I'm quite sur^e his left eye

will be as black as a coal before evening chapel, and he won't be able to go into the town for a month."

"Never mind his beauty, Dolly," said a young ruffian with a flat nose, and a shock head of red hair, familiarly known as Paddy Carey, from a favourite song to which he treated his room upon all occasions of musical display, but whose real name was O'Brien; "never mind his beauty, Dolly, he'll be handsome enough to keep you company any way: if you've such a taste for the fine arts, there's the baker just gone home, and he'd be a subject worthy of the glazier's talents. Bedad, Charlie looks as handsome as paint itself; and when he's had a raw beefsteak on his left eye with the gravy in it, and a cooked one in his stomach, he'll not know that he's been out of the private lesson room to-day."

"Grave onus," sighed Bob Wilkinson, who was a punster as well as a pugilist.

During this colloquy, and the usual congratulatory remarks which follow on success, at least from the winning side, the boys had continued standing about on the edge of the water, discussing the ups and downs of the late fight; the extraordinary pluck of their young schoolfellow; the certainty of his being flogged if he were found out; the chances of detection; and the excuses to be made in the event of such an untoward result.

There are always some good men, anxious to do their duty so well, however unpleasant, that they may be able to make up for those who are less careful of their responsibilities. I have especially remarked this to be the case with the under-masters in our large grammar schools, where there is always one or more who would willingly compound for want of capacity in school, by an amazing assiduity in the detection of offences, and in bringing the offenders to condign punishment. Dr. Gresham's was no exception to this rule; the Doctor's active mind expended itself upon the Greek article, the digamma, and the particle *ἀν*; his second master on the dialects peculiar to the Greek Testament writers; a third on the metres of the Aristophanic choruses, and the philosophy of the Tusculan disputations; whilst a fourth took compensation for his mental incapacity, or indolence, by the utmost activity in the discovery of mischief. The improvement which has taken place of late years in the system of scholastic education in this country, *in really accredited establishments*, is so very considerable, that few com-

plaints of unfair espial can ever be made. The great public schools have generally been free from it; but where dirty work is to be done, there are always tools to do it, which leave the hands of the employers comparatively clean in the world's eye.

Dr. Gresham would with pleasure have pounced upon the actors in the late scene; but as he was engaged at the moment in a private lecture, in which the question at issue was the probable consequences to the world of the conquest of Syracuse by the Athenians instead of the Romans, there was no prospect of his ever securing an offender for himself. But he would have been very much horrified at the necessity of sitting perdu behind a wall for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, to prevent or to punish anything short of immorality or vice. His junior master, Willis, was of a different opinion as to ends and means; and whilst our young friends had been exulting in the successful termination of an hour's charming sport to every one but the principal actors, Mr. Willis had been watching the proceeding in security, and now presented himself unexpectedly among them, to inquire more minutely into particulars, and to be sure that his eyesight had not deceived him in the persons engaged. Having satisfied himself upon these points, taken another cheerful view of the chief actors in the drama, added a note or two to his memoranda, and buttoned his coat across the chest with a sort of conscious rectitude of purpose quite imitable by a truly honest man, he departed.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSULTATION.

“Wer lügt, um einem Andern zu schaden, der ist ein böser Bube: wer aber lügt, um sich selbst aus der noth zu helfen, der ist ein schuldige Memme.”—*German Proverb.*

“I SAY, Russell, we shall get into a horrid row about this fight of Charlie Thornhill's: I knew that brute Willis would be sneaking somewhere. Thornhill's certain to be flogged, and so will any fourth-form boys that were caught.”

“I don't believe he put my name down at all,” said Russell, throwing himself into a chair; “if he did it's only a book of Homer, and we can swear the cads began it. I told Thornhill

to come up here after dinner, and Wilkinson and O'Brien, and the rest of the fellows who were in it. I can't think why he makes such a horrid row about it."

This conversation was going on in one of the studies between Russell and Glanville, who had come up from their house to the study to get up their afternoon's lesson, and to concert measures for mitigating the Doctor's anger, which was supposed to be great.

"I believe Jabez Smith to be worse than Willis. He puts old Gresham up to all these sorts of things," said Glanville. "He tells him it's not gentlemanly. How should he know what's gentlemanly or not? Oh! here come the other fellows. I wonder whether Willis has said anything about it to Thornhill: he's in his house." And the door opened, and in walked half a dozen of the principal abettors of the late affair of honour, the victor among them.

"Did Willis say anything at dinner about it, Thornhill?" said Wilkinson, who came in at that moment with two or three books under his arm, and a short but formidable stick laden with lead at the top, and which added materially to his appearance as a conspirator.

"Yes; he said a great deal about his duty. You know he always does. And he said it would be a very serious matter for the fifth and sixth form boys that were there."

"Say the cads began it," said a bold, confident voice, which proceeded from a handsome but unabashed junior, who was in the study more by sufferance than right.

"That's all very fine," said the hero; "but they didn't Cadwallader owned to me that he was entirely to blame."

"Then if I were you I should lick Cadwallader for getting me into a row. It's entirely his conceit. I suppose he would have the wall. It's his fault, 'Qui facit per alium facit per se.'" And here the speaker assumed an attitude of considerable importance: as of one who had said a really clever thing.

"I don't think it's worth telling a lie about," said Thornhill, "at all events." And as he spoke he blushed and hung his head, having evidently made a remark which was not likely to meet with general approbation.

"Well, that's all very fine," said Russell. "You're certain to be flogged, anyhow, and we may be sent away; the least is a book of Homer, or an imposition of a hundred lines every day for a fortnight. It's just enough to prevent one's going up to the Castle on Saturday. By Jingo! how black your eye's getting."

"I think it's as well to tell the truth about it, if Thornhill don't care," said Bob Wilkinson. "As to that confounded Willis"—and here he brought down his leaded stick, which, we regret to say, was used for knocking rabbits on the head and other poaching purposes, upon one of the two study tables with dangerous violence—"he ought to have his neck broken. There's not another master in the school would have sneaked in that way. Jabez might put the doctor up to a thing or two *for our good*; but he would have walked straight into us in a gentlemanly manner, as he calls it, and booked us on the spot."

"The long and the short of it is, we did begin," said Charlie. "There's no denying it; and I should not like to look the old Doctor in the face and tell him a crammer. He always behaves like a gentleman to us, and we shall get off pretty easy if we do the same by him." It will be observed that the speaker was younger and lower in the school than anyone present. He was singularly deficient in the learning which gave a boy power in those days: he wrote neither longs nor shorts, nor Greek iambs; he was miserably dull at all scholarship; but he had a great reputation as a runner and jumper, a cricketer, a horseman, and an oar. He had a handsome, cheerful face, indicative of determination rather than passion; a good manner, but thoroughly boyish in all its ways; and an utter freedom from anything like affectation. He might be said scarcely to know what fear was. He had no great flow of spirits, but was rather thoughtful, and his humour took the turn for droll images and illustration rather than for wit or repartee. Books he hated; but he never gave his masters reason to doubt him, as he honestly confessed to all the help he got from the upper boys when accused of it; and whilst his place was amongst his juniors in school, he was always to be seen arm-in-arm with his seniors out of school.

Some philosophers, with more recollection of their boyhood than virtues of their own, have affirmed that all children are by nature cowards and liars. We regret to be obliged to differ from these learned persons, or to oppose our own speculations to their personal experiences. But though we are not inclined to go with them to the full extent of their assertions, we are obliged reluctantly to admit that truth is not the distinguishing feature of youth. We believe many are made liars by a certain constitutional weakness or fear of the results of truth-speaking. They have not found that advantage in veracity for which they have been taught to look. With all that our nature has to

answer for, we prefer to affix this stigma to their education, and should like to visit upon their instructors that punishment which too frequently falls upon innocent shoulders. In the world the mummeries and the glare of fashion will not sparkle so brightly by the naked light of day as under the false splendour of candle-light, which may be in some sort compared to falsehood. Alloy in gold and silver is found to render the precious metal malleable and useful, and more fitted for everyday work, whilst it debases the coin and detracts from its true value. But those who know the intrinsic worth of the unadulterated mineral will not part with it for the specious mixture, any more than they who have found the inestimable price of truth will exchange it for the current coin of falsehood. If the world gives a boy no knowledge of the advantages of honesty, it can scarcely blame him for using that which appears to possess a practical superiority over it. The excellence of truth, even in the world, is evinced in the fact that a lie is only valuable according to its capacity for representing what is true: and amongst boys there is an innate estimation of "the honest," though they are frequently averse to practise what they admire. The truthfulness of Charlie Thornhill was, unwittingly, the secret of his popularity. Courage, especially physical courage, is not a rare quality, and is frequently dependent on material confirmation; but the courage which despises falsehood in a society which is false, will always command respect, although it sometimes fails of success.

"There goes the bell, and I haven't looked at my Horace. I'm sure to be called up; give us a construe, Cleverley, that's a good fellow. I only want the last part. Simpson's sure to be called up before me; he hasn't been put on this week." And all speculation on the late fight and its consequences was at once merged in "*Et militavi non sine gloriâ*;" of which charming little ode, its meaning or construction, Master Charlie was shortly found to be sublimely ignorant. He derived considerable consolation, however, from the fact that had he only been put on, according to his calculation, at the end of the lesson instead of at the beginning, he should have given a not very original, but a very excellent translation, derived from the joint efforts of Cleverley and a crib during the five minutes of probation after the ringing of the school-bell.

After afternoon school, and before the locking up for the night, it was the custom of Dr. Gresham, or one of his masters,

to read prayers, which consisted of portions of the liturgy and the lessons for the day, in the school chapel. I am not quite sure of the light in which the learned Doctor regarded this portion of scholastic duty. If not so reverently as might be, I must beg the reader to bear in mind that it was in days before the contention between High Church and Low Church and No Church had assumed such marked features as now; when a test as strong, though not so comprehensible, must be applied to schoolmasters and teachers as the Corporation Act itself. I can, however, affirm that for the boys themselves it was robbed of its religious character to a certain extent by the custom of learning the morning's repetition during the psalms, and by the calling over which immediately followed. Neither do I think that the religious sentiment was much strengthened by the habit of standing in crowds at the chapel door, and administering con-dign punishment to public offenders against scholastic etiquette, refractory fags, the unwashed, and the miserable and uncongenial of every degree. I think many of them must have prayed heartily for release from, or power over, their oppressors; and many a vow was registered as to how they would lick their fags when their turn came. Beyond that I know not what the supplications might have been.

On the evening in question the prayers were finished, and the monitor had called over; but the Doctor did not leave his seat, and his arched and strongly-marked eyebrows contracted with an unwonted frown.

"Wilkinson, Russell, Glanville, Cleverley," said the Doctor; and then there was a pause, whilst he prepared his pencil with a knife: it was before the common days of Mordan and Co. Then he continued, in a voice more awfully sonorous than before, striking dismay into the palpitating bosoms before him, "O'Brien, Jenkinson major, Walker, Thornhill, and Cadwallader, stand out;" and out they stood. "The monitor has brought me your names as being concerned in another disgraceful scene with the town's boys. Follow me into my study. The monitor will attend."

Here was a pretty state of things. The chapel was the recognised place for the settlement of all such public wrongs. Nothing but the most heinous offences ever found their way to the Doctor's sanctum, which consisted of all the mystery which oaken book-cases, Elizabethan windows, crimson curtains, coats of arms, and the oldest black letter in folio volumes could impart. If the

Doctor was heavily learned in school, grandly solemn in chapel, playfully erudite in society, he was simply awful and sublime in his study. Here complaints of private wrong were heard, and grievances redressed: the Doctor's study was a templum cut off from vulgar tread, and approachable only by sixth-form high-boys. Their case was evidently a heavy one; and they followed the monitor in a few minutes in melancholy silence into the precincts of the unwritten law.

The great man—and he was a great man, if great and varied learning, and a capability of imparting it, could make him so—was already seated. Ponderous tomes of reference ornamented the chairs and tables, even the very floor. Manuscript sheets lay before him, and rolls of uncorrected letter-press in Greek, Latin, and Sanscrit. The room, handsomely furnished as it was, smelt of the mighty ancients: a tomb of their remains, which were to blossom again with branches more thickly laden with fruit than ever; and the Doctor was the high priest of the whole. Here and there a sixth-form exercise of Sapphics or Alcaics, or a translation from Shakespeare into Greek iambs, with the Doctor's nervous corrections and erasures, alone connected him with the little world below.

"And so—so—so you've been fighting again, I hear; ay, ay. What is the meaning of this?" said Dr. Gresham, with a curious, absent hesitation, as if he were looking for a Sanscrit root in the middle of it all. "You've been fighting," said he, with a grim smile.

"Yes, sir."

"And with whom, with whom was it?"

"With the cads, sir," said O'Brien, the descendant from the kings of Ulster.

"With whom, sir?" said the Doctor, not unmindful of his dignity.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, sir. With the snobs—the town's boys, I mean, sir."

"And which was the aggressor, young gentlemen?"

A silence of some seconds. "I was, sir," said Thornhill.

"And who is I, pray?" The Doctor loved to forget names as much as the members of a certain august family are said to remember them.

"Thornhill, sir."

"Thornhill, Thornhill. And whose house is he in? and in which form? Have you got your remove, boy?"

"No, sir. I shall have it next half."

"Not if you don't do better than last time," said the Doctor, who became suddenly alive to the claims of Charlie to distinction. "Not if you don't do better. Did you know my orders about fighting with the town's boys? Did you know that I intended to flog the first boy that was caught, or to send him away? You're very likely to get your remove, some of you—some of you." And here the Doctor gave another short laugh, which boded better for the delinquents. "And—come nearer, Thornhill; nearer still, boy. Why, you have got a black eye!" And here the venerable sage looked as if that was a most unreasonable result of a three-quarters of an hour's fight.

"If you please, sir, we found Muffins—I beg your pardon, sir, I mean the baker's boy, quarrelling with one of the little fellows, and——"

"And you went to help him. Well—well, I shall see all about it to-morrow; but don't go out from the school-fields till you hear from me again. Thornhill—Thornhill—ay! I must flog Thornhill; he's been sent down twice in the last week, and now he's got a black eye in a fight with a baker. Stay. Monitor, bring Thornhill into the upper school to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and the names of the rest who were with him. Take care, take care, young gentlemen. Wilkinson and O'Brien, you're old enough to know better; but I've got my eye upon some of you. Go along, go along;" and the Doctor was already deep in his new work, an edition of Aristophanes.

The immense advantages of flogging would fill a volume. What a horrible thing is that promiscuous laceration of the back, arms, and shoulders, by a cane! always at the mercy of momentary impulse. But there is a dignity in flogging. It comes after a night's reflection, and leaves an opening for extenuating circumstances to appear. Besides, whilst there's life there's hope, and no one knows what may happen to divert the execution of a sentence, however just. And yet Charlie Thornhill declared he wouldn't be flogged. He didn't care whether he was a fourth-form boy, or not; he would not be flogged. And when Charlie Thornhill said a thing, they knew that he meant it.

The next morning was looked for with intense anxiety by his schoolfellows, not so much on their own account, as to see or hear the result of Thornhill's determination. Such a thing as a young gentleman's resistance to a flogging, who had not yet

attained the privileged form, was unheard of. And yet Thornhill did not look as if he ought to be flogged.

Strange to say, on the following day, after morning chapel, the Doctor's own servant, Mr. Bandy, appeared in Willis's house, with a desire for Mr. Thornhill "to step this way."

Many were the conjectures as to what had taken place, when half an hour after, a fly was at the door. Charlie Thornhill was on his way to meet his brother, with undefined fears and a heavy heart, but without his flogging.

It was not known till some days after that a mysterious fate had robbed the boys of a kind and generous father. Squire Thornhill had been shot on his road back from Bidborough races. But we must retrace our steps, to explain the position of our hero, and the circumstances which left him fatherless at so early an age.

CHAPTER IV.

"MY FRIEND GEOFFREY."

"Celui qui remplissait alors cette place était un gentilhomme."

ONE of the most beautiful places in the midland counties of England is Thornhills. At one extremity of a park remarkable for its natural variations of soil, its rank luxuriance of heather and fern, its gnarled and twisted oaks, its masses of wood and water, and on its outskirts for the richness of its produce and the state of cultivation to which it has been brought, stands the house, a noble specimen of the early Tudor style. Its magnificent hall opens on every side but one to rooms of grand and lofty proportions, lighted, or rather obscured, by deeply mullioned windows, not unfrequently enriched by the emblazonment of heraldry, and still retaining the shields of the new nobility to whom it had been granted at the close of the Wars of the Roses, when the Lancastrian Henry rewarded some of his most active followers with the spoils of the extinct Yorkists. On the walls still hang the well-preserved memorials of the chase or war. A fine black oak staircase leads to the upper storeys of the house, the brightness and smoothness of which must have put to the test the hilarious guests of the first Mr. Thornhill, an eminent

banker and goldsmith of Charles II's reign; and which, to say truth, occasionally at the present time, tested the stability of less practised toppers, when, bougie in hand, they assayed to gain their chambers after Geoffrey Thornhill's more refined but not less liberal hospitality. Amidst the tattered banners and the rusted spears and swords of more exciting periods were scattered the more peaceful trophies of mimic war: stags' heads, boars' tusks, foxes' masks and brushes, hunting whips of every age since the days of the Merry Monarch, and fishing apparatus from the time of Izaak Walton to the most approved methods of modern invention, adorned the walls with rich profusion. Here was a picture of old Tregonwell Frampton and Diomed; there was Colonel O'Kelly and Eclipse; John Ward and his hounds occupied a niche on one side of the finely-carved oaken chimney-piece, Colonel Joliffe and the old Surrey on the other; whilst between the two, and above the fireplace, was a fine full-length picture of the grandfather of the present proprietor of the place, in hunting costume, who had set the example of keeping the county hounds without a subscription, an example which had been duly followed by both his successors. It was, indeed, pretty clear that the habits of the knightly family which had held the property till loyalty and claret beggared its descendant in the Civil Wars, had been only exchanged for amusements more befitting the age in which we live. I can say nothing about the respectable money-lender, who took the place for a bad debt, and called the lands after his own name: he probably had but little knowledge of country pursuits, and was more at home in Lombard Street than on his estate of Thornhills; but there can be no doubt that a taste had come down through the days of hawking and harriers, until the name of Thornhill of Thornhills included the very quintessence of a country life.

In a mixed aristocracy, like that of England, such a family as the Thornhills was certain to hold its own. High connections, an unencumbered estate of about twelve thousand a year, and a character for a certain amount of talent, derived chiefly from diplomacy in minor courts, and the representation of the county on high Conservative principles, made them respected by the highest rank and looked up to by men of almost every position. It must, however, be admitted that they shone rather amongst the provincial aristocracy than in that heterogeneous mass of beings called London society. The father of Geoffrey Thornhill, though he had refused a baronetcy and married a peer's daughter,

had lived almost entirely amongst his tenantry, until the end of the London season invariably filled his house with overworked politicians, overfed loungers, sportsmen, and idlers of every degree. Then Thornhills became the house of the county. No duke rivalled the profusion of its hospitality: and Lady Charlotte, in the newest and largest of white kid gloves, amidst her china monsters and antique plate, received men and women of every shade of politics and every colour of religion. Her charity was of the most expansive; and I am sorry to say that she busied herself no more with the tittle-tattle of high life, and the irregularities of the fashionable *roués* who surrounded her throne, than about the infidelities of the matrons of imperial Rome. She was a most charming person; was still handsome; but had retired from London life upon the birth of her son Geoffrey; and had taken thenceforth as much interest in her own village of Silverstone and its half-dozen rheumatic inhabitants, as her husband had in county business and the Middleshire fox-hounds.

But Lady Charlotte grew old and her husband grew old: and as will happen in the nature of things, the property, the china monsters, and the hounds descended to Geoffrey Thornhill. Everybody worshipped him, as in duty bound. The men ate with him, drank with him, shot with him, and hunted with him; and the women pulled caps for him. He was the delight of all hearts, as who should not have been, who was the handsomest and one of the richest men in the county? He had his faults: a little hastiness of temper, and a turn for dissipation; but he was full of generous impulses, and never could say "No" to himself or to other people. When Emily Carisbrooke, the eldest daughter of Sir George Carisbrooke, and one of the prettiest girls in the country, married him, she was looked upon by her acquaintance as the most fortunate of women. "Such a handsome man!" said Mary Truman; "And so amusing!" said Caroline Ashley; "I sat next to him at dinner once at Lord Bray's, and he sent me into fits of laughter about the Keatings' water party, when Lady Singleton's wig fell off in the lock, and was carried down the stream. It was fished out at last, and she was obliged to put it on again; but she has had a cold in the head ever since." "I am afraid he's fond of play, dear," said her mother, who had made a violent but unsuccessful effort herself in Caroline's behalf, and comforted herself with the notion of his irregularities. And it was true: his mother,

Lady Charlotte, always said of him—though mothers are apt to be partial—he had but two faults: “he loves play, and always manages to fall in love with the wrong woman.” Lady Charlotte’s idea of the wrong woman was somebody she did not like for a daughter-in-law; Mrs. Geoffrey Thornhill herself had other notions upon the subject, and not of so cheerful a character. I knew Geoffrey Thornhill somewhat intimately, certainly better than his father or mother knew him, or than he knew himself; and shall scarcely discharge my duty to my reader unless I give an honest description of the fine fellow, who had fallen a victim to assassination. In person he was tall and handsome: his features were especially good, perhaps better than the expression of his face, which announced sensuality and weakness of purpose; he was graceful, and well made, as quite a young man; indulgence gave a fulness to his figure in after years which was only kept in check by violent exercise on horseback and on foot. He had a peculiarly pleasant smile, which played about his mouth; and as he passed a life almost free from anxieties, and amidst the gratification of almost every wish, it is scarcely to be wondered at that it was ever present. He was by far pleasanter in society than out of it; not an uncommon thing: and there are thousands who acquire a reputation for temper in the world, quite unmerited when judged by home life. He was a selfish man; and rather thoughtless of little kindnesses which cost some sacrifice, but lavish in all things that cost him none. Having never felt the want of money, he was liberal and openhanded, without being truly generous or charitable; for he made no inquisition into the objects of his bounty, nor the results of his gifts. To his wife he was never unkind; but he frequently pained her by open admiration of other women, and by attentions which had not escaped the observation of the world in which they lived. He was an excellent friend. As far as a mount, a day’s shooting, or a hundred pounds could be of service to an acquaintance, Geoffrey Thornhill was not wanting; but he would have foregone no pleasure for the sake of anyone; and regarded a death in his circle only as so far painful as it deprived him of an anticipated enjoyment. Without being a talented man, he had much quickness and cleverness, and a happy facility of expression which approached eloquence at a county meeting, where he never spoke excepting on subjects with which he fully identified himself. He was thoroughly impulsive; but having been generally

successful, he had never been repressed or repulsed, so as to become morose. He had the making of a good member of society ; but having no settled principle, he was deficient in all that would have made it available in the day of trial. He was affectionate in disposition ; fond of his boys, and proud of them ; but careless of their real good. His greatest favourite was his only brother, a London banker, and of tastes, habits, and disposition the complete reverse of himself. This attachment was mutual, and the feeling is not very extraordinary. Each saw in the character of the other some want of his own ; the hard-working, thick-crusted man of business, who had a mind intent upon nothing but money, who spent from 10 A.M. till 4 P.M. every day of his life in the counting-house, receiving and paying, and conning the aspect of continental politics, admired the unembarrassed *nonchalance* and careless generosity of the other ; whilst Geoffrey could not but admire in his brother Henry that perseverance, steadiness, and strict principle in which he felt himself to be deficient. Be that as it may, the most amiable trait in the character of either brother was fraternal love.

But little remains to be told of Geoffrey Thornhill. He was an adept at all sports and athletic exercises. From his cradle he had been brought up amongst horses and guns ; and education completed what nature seemed to have begun, by making him the most finished sportsman of his day. His feats and skill live in the recollection of his acquaintances, and are still quoted as unrivalled even in our own times. He could hunt his own hounds, if need be, after a night of hazard or whist. He knew as much of his covers and his fields as the keepers themselves, and was equally conversant with the favourite haunts of the birds. He was as willing to encounter danger against the poachers by whom his neighbourhood was infested, as those who were paid for the occupation. Constant excitement seemed necessary to his very existence. His almost universal mode of travelling was by relays of hacks, and he performed the most astonishing distances in the shortest possible space of time. Need I say that such things as these made him the most popular of men ? and if his own sex or his own rank regarded him with some envy, he was dear to the women and the poor as the apple of their eye. What rendered the whole so charming was the most perfect absence of all affectation, and the unconscious ease with which he distanced all competitors in the race. Where could he have found an enemy ?

CHAPTER V.

AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN'S CASTLE.

"Hæc res et jungit, junctos et servat amicos."

"How do you go to Bidborough, Thornhill?" said an *habitué* of Brookes's, as Geoffrey Thornhill lounged into the bay window about 11 A.M. on a lovely morning in May, with "The Times" in one hand and a straight riding-whip in the other, having left his hack at the door in charge of a red-waistcoated man, well known at the Corner. "I ride to Marston's to dinner to-day; it is only twenty-seven miles, and I have sent on a hack half way; he rides on with me to the course to-morrow morning. What are they doing about the gray?"

"What, Benevenuto, for The Gentlemen's Stakes? Oh! they back him at evens; there are only four to start; and he is quite safe to win, unless he dies in the night. Do you know anything about him?"

"Yes; they had a trial yesterday, and he is said to be seven pounds better than Maid of the Mill; so that there can be no mistake. I've just backed him for another thousand."

"Who rides him?"

"Kildonald. Between ourselves that's the most awkward part of the business; but Marston thinks himself under some sort of obligation to the man, and he makes a great point of having the mount. As it was offered to him long ago, I can hardly see how he can help himself now. I don't like Kildonald."

"Perhaps you are prejudiced, and dislike his countrymen in general."

"On the contrary, I have a particular fancy for Irishmen; that is, of the worst and highest classes; the former are not understood, and the latter have not always fair play. Their faults are almost invariably such as lean towards excellences, or arise from impulse; and they are finished gentlemen."

"Kildonald scarcely comes up to that standard; and how the deuce he manages to live as he does I have no idea. He has the most elastic conscience about women and horseflesh I ever knew."

"Don't let him hear you say so, Carteret," said Geoffrey, laughing; "he has had no affair on his hands so long that he

thinks of returning to Ireland to look for some gentleman to oblige him. You know that Michael Johnson only saved his life by declining to fight until Kildonald had paid him, as he couldn't wind up his accounts satisfactorily without ; and Michael didn't think it right to leave the world without doing so."

"You heard what he said about poor Dennis Brown? It seems that two men were disputing on the Curragh as to his death, whether it took place in England or India, with his regiment. Having some slight acquaintance with Kildonald they appealed to him. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'you could not have referred to a person more capable of deciding your wager. It is drawn. I shot him myself in Ireland after the Kildare election in 18—.'"

"Cold-blooded brute!" said Thornhill, as he nodded an adieu to his friend, and mounted his hack to ride his first stage towards Bidborough.

Nothing perhaps is so uninteresting as local description. A feature may be declaratory of character ; an eye is so, a mouth and chin peculiarly so ; and even a nose may be characteristic of feeling or temper. But what is to be said for a straight street or a crooked one ; irregularity of building or the reverse ; a church with a tower or a steeple ; and whether the mayor lives in a red house or a white one? Nothing whatever, absolutely nothing ; and the honest novelist, who is not making a book, but writing a story, is completely nonplussed. Yet must I say a word for Bidborough. It had a singular pre-eminence. It was and is the very stupidest country town in England. During eleven months and eight-and-twenty days of every year it enjoyed a tranquillity perfectly marvellous. Yet it was not without inhabitants. Of course it had a parson. It was a fine large living, some 1,500*l.* a-year, and usually reserved for the second son of the "great family," as the Earl of Bidborough was called. I never see a very mouldy-looking place where there appears to be little or nothing to do, without finding that the emolument for doing it is more than sufficient. There was a lawyer ; but I apprehend that the greater part of his business consisted of the agency to the "great family," and a few others, who trusted him with the collection of rents and the drawing of leases. Like all other robberies, those can be most effectively perpetrated in the dark. There was also an apothecary ; he would have done well, but for the adoption of hydropathy ;

which, we presume by its tenuity, had penetrated to these remote and mysterious regions. The place itself consists of a long ill-paved street, ignorant of *trottoir*, in the midst of a down county. It has a mouldy smell and grass-grown appearance. It is itself purely agricultural in its population, though situated in the middle of one of our cloth manufacturing districts. But for the conversation at Brookes's, the reader would be puzzled to know what attraction could have taken Geoffrey Thornhill to such a spot.

The fact is, that though Bidborough itself was unknown, its race-course had an universal reputation. It was more or less a private meeting; the tumult and turmoil of a great race-course were wanting; and a considerable number of the races were devoted to gentleman riders. This in itself, independently of other circumstances, made it more select, and, consequently, a more agreeable rendezvous than usual. Professional service was at a discount.

The present season was expected to be remarkably good. The great house was full, and the neighbouring gentry had determined upon a revival of the former days of splendour. Of late years it had been upon the wane; but there was a general feeling, a tacit understanding, amongst racing men that Bidborough was to be the fashion.

I speak with all due deference of fashion; her power is too great and too universal to be gainsaid. She makes a hero, or spoils a reputation, in the same breath. She encourages a Blondin, a Leotard, and a Spurgeon, or damns a mountebank of similar pretensions, for no better cause. One season she takes white soup, another brown; this year strict morality in a loose coat and crinoline; next year laxity of morals and rigidity of costume will be in vogue.

The gentlemen of England had determined that Bidborough races should be more attractive than ever; and the great point of attraction was to be The Corinthian Stakes, a handicap race for gentleman riders alone. Of starters there would be but four; but the money which was on the favourite, a fine three-year-old, the property of Sir Frederick Marston, called Benevenuto, gave some idea of the opinion in which he was held by the great patrons of the turf.

The ride from London to Sir Frederick Marston's was sufficiently interesting. In a legitimate three-volumed novel I think the writer would have been justified in devoting a page or two to

the memory of Byron, as the horseman passes within sight of Harrow, or in culling the flowers of English history for the benefit of his readers as he neared St. Albans. I say, peace to the great Earl of Warwick and the heroes who fell in the wars of York and Lancaster. Besides, I must identify myself with my *dramatis personæ*,—and I feel convinced that nothing was further from the thoughts of Geoffrey Thornhill than the Wars of the Roses. At the latter town he mounted his second hack, and was not long in reaching the seat of Sir Frederick, where he was welcomed with as much cordiality as is consistent with true good breeding. Geoffrey was a favourite everywhere; and Lady Marston was no exception to so general a rule.

Sir Frederick and Lady Marston were still young; that is comparatively with Thornhill. He had been one of the young men whom the latter loved to have about him; a good shot, a horseman, a *bon vivant*, and a congenial spirit in many ways. Ten years in point of age, when a man first appears, make a vast difference, and establish an influence which not unfrequently lasts through life. Marston had more to thank Thornhill for than he ever understood. A long minority and a taste for dissipation made him the object of attack to every well-born sharper; and it was well for him that he found a home where he might indulge his tastes to a certain extent, without falling into the hands of those who would have been merciless in the face of such temptation. He was reserved for better things. At thirty he married a woman every way suited to him, whose charms of conversation and manner made his home cheerful, and whose beauty of person accorded well with the hospitalities dispensed by one of the richest country gentlemen in England. He had a pack of fox-hounds in a country only second to Leicestershire and Northamptonshire; a gallery of pictures, on which care, knowledge, and money had been lavished; a deer forest in Scotland; a villa at Como; and yet he was dissatisfied with his lot. Fortune had denied him two things. He had been married five years without a child, and he had kept a string of horses for seven, but had never won a great race. For the former disappointment there was no accounting, and there at present seemed to be no remedy: for the latter no expense or trouble should be spared.

What were the awful mysteries of a former and less-civilized age, which drove woman from the table of her lord as soon as she had satisfied the cravings of nature, whilst he and his comrades were left to indulge in a prolonged repast? Was it that

the male became then more stupid, or more savage, than usual? or that some terrible orgies remained to be enacted at which the mistress had no more right to be present than Alcibiades at the Eleusinian mysteries, or Clodius at those of the Bona Dea? Be that as it may, the custom has obtained in this country, and at the time I write of was remarkably popular. Our ancients drank gloriously. Pitt, Fox, and Sheridan have no rivals in these degenerate days: and their eloquence was as strong and full-flavoured as their claret. Women could but have silently looked on, and in horror: and their conversation was of politics and of war—fit subjects for such merry meetings. They had discarded the female Marlboroughs and Mashams from their deliberations, and laid plans for controlling other people when unable to control themselves.

In France society was differently constituted. Women relinquished not the right to preside over the after-dinner conversation of their husbands, and the mistresses of kings and councillors became mistresses of the world. The Pompadours and Du Barrys had the best of it, and their influence was all-powerful in the petty intrigues which sprang well from thin and unfrequent potations. A great man was your two-bottle toper; a still greater was he who carried off a four-quart measure of a well-cooked vintage; and great must have been the oratory that flowed from those rubicund lips. It is a treat now but seldom enjoyed to hear a speech the effect of one truth-compelling bottle: the rough and racy outpourings of anything beyond it we look for in vain. There were giants in those days.

The reader must not imagine that either Marston or his guest attempted to rival the performances of a bygone age. They were sober and decorous gentlemen as the world goes, and in wine especially. Gastronomy is the fashion of the day, but drunkenness is not. Still with no less certainty did Lady Marston and her guests rise at the usual time, and amidst a rustling of silks and satins, and the profound salutations of one devoted slave of the door, retire to the drawing-room. Sir Frederick and Thornhill drew their chairs closer together; the butler appeared with one fresh and cool bottle of choice Lafitte, and they proceeded to discuss questions in which, as the reader may feel an interest, he shall be allowed to participate.

“And how are the boys, Thornhill?”

“Well; and at school. Tom is at Eton, and Charlie is to join him. I hope it may be for his good.”

"Ah! my friend Charlie must be getting a big fellow now. I like that boy, Geoffrey, there's something very original about him."

"Originality has its drawbacks, Marston: and if your young favourite was less original and more fond of work it might be better for him. However, Eton will do that for him, perhaps."

"It must be singularly changed since my day if it does," said Sir Frederick. "If I were bent upon giving a naturally indolent boy full opportunity for indulging his favourite weakness, I should certainly select a public school for him."

"Why so?"

"Because, although there is plenty of discipline for the disposition, there is none for the mind; and the distinction is very marked. A cub or an ass may be licked into shape; a stupid fellow may be brightened; an impudent fellow may be taken down; but there's no cure for idleness in a public school: and it's almost the only fault that could not be cured there. How does Tom get on?"

"Admirably. He's a great favourite, comes home surrounded by chums, who all admire and copy him, and has never missed his remove. However, he's plenty of brains. Charlie's my *bête noire*, and seems proud of his nickname, The Dunce of the Family."

"I wish he were a poor man's son. I prognosticate great things for Charlie," said Marston, good-naturedly. "Tom can take care of himself; but younger sons are not always so well taken care of. I suppose he must have a profession."

"It's early days to think of that. I believe he'll have his uncle's property; for, between ourselves, Fred, I've nothing to leave him. Every shilling of Thornhills is entailed, and the Irish property too; besides which the latter is saddled with my wife's settlement, and is scarcely able to bear the burden."

"Your life's not insured?"

"Not for a halfpenny."

"What a thoughtless fellow you are, Thornhill! I ought to have been your Mentor, not you mine."

"When I first knew you, you were as little of a Telemachus as I of a Mentor: times have improved with you. But you haven't told me what to do with Charlie; he's nearly fourteen so I must make my mind up soon."

"Send him to Henry Reynolds."

"What! the rector? My dear fellow, he knows Charlie too well, and me too."

"You don't know him, if you imagine his love for you or Charlie would ever interfere with his duties."

"You think so, Marston? You ought to know; but I own it did not strike me."

"He's the truest-hearted gentleman in this county: and no man doubts his learning. His living is but small, and his family large: so that you may benefit him and yourself too."

"I must have another chat with you about Reynolds. The boy is idle, fond of horses and dogs, with a strong will, good manners and appearance, and would make his way at Eton."

"The worst thing that could happen to him. He would never learn a lesson, or write a piece of Latin, or do a copy of verses for himself. As to his horses and dogs, he's a Thornhill, I presume; nothing more. Cramwell tells me that the duke finds the present system very defective in orthography and every useful information, and determines on instituting an army examination. This is only the thin end of the wedge; that examination must soon become competitive; and the end will be open government appointments, civil and military. Old Cramwell is delighted at the prospect. At first he shook his head, talked about tone and the official interest, but soon gave way; for my Lord Cramwell discovered some consolation in the very pretty pickings to be got for his party by an increased staff of principalships, inspectorships, commissionerships, and a number of other ships, which the old duke good-humouredly, with an eye to his own profession, called 'ships of the line.'"

"Then," said Thornhill, "they may get more learning into the army, but they will lose caste. If the modern system is to be forced upon us, what is to become of Eton and Harrow, and half the good schools in England?"

"They'll soften down, Thornhill, to meet the times; and a boy may write French without being chicken-hearted, and understand arithmetic without being a writing-master or national schoolboy: because that is about the reality of our present feeling on the subject. I learnt nothing at Eton, and I don't suppose Charlie would learn much more. You can teach him to be a gentleman, and that's about the use of Harrow or Eton to two-thirds that go there. It happens to be just the knowledge that your boy doesn't want. And now let's go to the drawing-room, as you will take no more. Emily will be expecting us by this time. Thompson, have a fire lighted in the smoking-room in half an hour's time."

CHAPTER VI.

"AND ITS INMATES."

"A wife well-humour'd, dutiful, and chaste."

You see in all novels, or romances, or stories of any kind, a certain amount of paper devoted to "bosh." I mean staid and well-digested reflections, or dissertations, on literature, politics, ecclesiastical architecture, education, Puseyism, morals, or love. Whenever I come across such heavy reading in light literature I make a point of skipping it. I have occasionally found a difficulty in ascertaining exactly how much to skip without losing the point of the story: and this has delayed me. To prevent my reader from suffering any such inconvenience, I intend to devote the beginning of my chapters to any such serious and unprofitable labour, when I find it absolutely necessary either for the respectability of my book, or for the amount of matter which custom requires. There must be in books, as in men, a certain ponderosity to give them character; and an author may no more venture in these days of universal paste and scissors, to write a series of ups and downs, and ins and outs, of heroes and heroines, without considerable ethical deviations; or to make two or three persons talk in the simple and rational manner in which most ladies and gentlemen do talk, without some ambitious interpolations, than he would venture to exhibit a stout gentleman in top boots on a bay cob, riding quietly round the circle at Astley's, or a bricklayer carrying his hod and mortar up a ladder at the Alhambra, instead of the tights and spangles of Blondin and Leotard, or the velvet habit and bejewelled housings of Caroline and her charger. Anybody, says Longinus the Younger, can write a book if he describe men and women as they are. Yes, and what a book it would be! Thank heaven we none of us know each other as we are. No man alive could describe us as we are. He would avert his face from his own picture and blush to find himself no better than his worst creation. The fact is, men and women are very much alike in this world: the wicked are seldom as bad as they are represented, and the best have a leaven which has escaped observation in the lump. We are actuated by the same sort of passions as our fellow-men. Cir-

cumstances change the direction of our actions and their results : education and self-government the intensity of our motives. Another thing we are blind to is the consequences of our conduct ; and the greatest malefactor may have the least to answer for. That is a comfortable reflection for the black sheep, and may teach the golden-fleeced ones a little charity.

Both Marston and Thornhill were men of the world, and they were neither of them stupid men. According to generally-received opinion, they were well-educated men. The former had had the advantages, for which he seemed scarcely grateful, of Eton and the Continent, the latter of Eton and Oxford. Both had been to these men a mere fashionable course of training, not supposed to be practically useful, nor, indeed, as having any definite result. Yet unconsciously the character of both had been affected to a certain extent by their early life. The absence of the practical rendered either incapable of fully comprehending the subject on which they were engaged at the conclusion of the last chapter ; but the effect of their education it was which plunged them into a discussion with which neither of them was fitted to cope. Marston was disappointed with Eton, because it gave him few advantages in the career he afterwards adopted. He was not an inelegant scholar, though not a deep one ; and Cambridge or Oxford might have found him not deficient in university requirements, and given him a position independently of his social rank. On the Continent he could not be nobody ; a man of large fortune and rank never is : but he was less than nobody in society, and he felt acutely how much he lost by the exclusiveness of his knowledge. He had now acquired a certain refinement and sympathy with modern tastes, which increased his aversion to what he considered a mistaken system ; and he saw very little good in public education beyond its discipline, which affected neither himself nor Thornhill. Geoffrey, on the other hand, was a clever boy ; had gone through the school with credit to himself ; did not know that he would probably have been much what he was, wherever he had been, and attributed all the good in his character to Eton, and all the bad to the world and its temptations. He scarcely knew that one duty of school would have been to teach him to withstand them.

The hospitalities of Woodlands Abbey were charming. The master, we have seen, could be agreeable ; nay, more, he could be, and was with his intimates, a very fascinating person : but Lady Marston far outshone her husband in her character of

hostess. To say she was one of the most beautiful women of her day was to say the least in her praise. Her mind was cultivated to an extent scarcely conceivable in days when ornament takes the place of substantial merit. Her manners had a charm which pertain only to such as have embellished English sincerity with the elegances of the best foreign society. She was kind, but graceful; even warm, but courteous; a woman of the world in the midst of home duties; thoughtful and tender, but not the less witty and conversational. She received Geoffrey Thornhill kindly, inquired enthusiastically after his wife and his boys, of whom she knew him to be prouder than of anything; regretted the absence of other company, but congratulated herself and Marston upon their accidental presence in the country at this time, when they could be of service to so old a friend. "But we shall see you back after the races, and then perhaps you will give us a day or two more, as we do not leave till the end of the week." She took her leave and her candle together, and the men were left to their devices.

If there be anything in the proverb "*In vino veritas*," it is not badly capped by "*Ex fumo dare lucem*." From behind a cigar we get the silver lining of the cloud. We say our best things, and keep the real conversation of the day for that cheerful hour when ordinary mortals have retired to rest. A smoking-room is an essential in a gentleman's house; and Marston's was not behind others in its comforts. The barbarism that invites a man into the open air of an evening, to the chill and fog of an English climate in the month of May, to enjoy his postprandial tobacco, is deserving of severe reprobation or silent contempt; and both Sir Frederick and his guest, though far behind the present fumiferous age, were too conversant with ordinary comforts to deny themselves the luxury of arm-chairs and a fire, in a room embellished by the coaches of Henderson, and favourite horses and hounds by Ward, Fernely, Davis, and all the best sporting artists of the day.

It scarcely required these to remind our two friends of the importance of to-morrow. It had been the subject uppermost in their minds for some part of the day; and though Marston was too well accustomed to winning or losing a race, and Geoffrey Thornhill too careless of a few hundreds, more or less, to let his present book tinge his general tone with one shade of anxiety, still they had both quite enough at stake to be glad to talk over the probable chances of success.

Thornhill puffed a few clouds of smoke before him, and from behind them inquired after the gray.

"All right," said Marston, "he never looked better; shall we have in Turner?"

"No! never mind about Turner, Fred; let us know about the trial. Are you satisfied it was all right yourself? for though I believe Turner to be as honest as the day, those fellows have temptations which we know nothing about."

"I took every precaution; it is my opinion that the horse can't lose—and that he will win the Leger if he keeps his form. He is better than he ever was before, certainly a stone better than when he won at Northampton."

"I'm glad to hear it. If I'd seen you yesterday I should have backed him for the double event. We'll go in good time to-morrow, and see what Musgrave will do about the Leger. Burke, that Irish fellow, was at Tattersall's, and wanted to lay against him for the Corinthian; though I hear he's taken all he can get about him for Doncaster some time ago. Are these the cigars you imported for yourself the year before last?"

"No! Pontet got them for Lord Peterborough, and bought them back at his sale, with quantities of all kinds of snuff. Deuce of a fellow for snuff was old Peterborough! He bought half George the Fourth's lot at the Carlton House sale, because it put him in mind of the days of the Regency."

Here they both relapsed into silence: it was quite clear that there was nothing very interesting in the topic they had accidentally hit upon. It required no great effort to get back to the old one, however: for after about a couple of minutes, Geoffrey asked who was to ride Marston's horse.

"The very best gentleman rider in England!" said Sir Frederick, with enthusiasm, as if his friend Thornhill must be satisfied now. "The very best in England, bar none."

"You mean Kildonald; I quite agree with you. There is no one out like him: and as to the young ones, they are no use with him whatever. He has the finest hands, and he combines monstrous power with great elegance. He can do anything with his horse; in fact, he knows too much."

"You don't like him, Geoffrey."

"I don't like his party. He's a pleasant, gentlemanly fellow enough; but that fellow Burke is in every robbery, and I think Kildonald is in with him."

"They are compatriots ; but there can't be much in common between such men as Burke and Kildonald," said Marston, with what truth the reader has some notion. But the baronet was perhaps the least suspicious of men. When on town he always kept at least one pocket open for every man's hand to be in it ; and since his residence abroad, and his marriage, he scarcely believed in the existence of premeditated rascality. At this moment came a knock at the door, and a servant entered, slowly and noiselessly, as is the wont of gentlemen's servants. "What horse is to go on to-morrow to Sittingdean for Mr. Thornhill, sir ? Turner is gone with Benevenuto, and left no orders."

"Send the roan mare and my black hack. We shall start from here at ten, and tell George to be ready at Sittingdean at half-past eleven. What sort of a night is it ?"

"Rains fast, Sir Frederick." And the man left the room.

"So much the better for the gray ; it can't be too heavy for him ; every drop that falls will be ounces in his favour : it's a certainty if he lives till the morning." And the sanguine baronet indulged in a prolonged yawn, which reminded both that they might retire for the night.

"Good night, Marston ; breakfast at nine. And you think it is a certainty ?" said Thornhill for the last time.

"As certain as a thing can be. Good night !" And they both took their candles and their separate ways to bed.

The evening was cold and very cheerless outside : inside, the bright fire, heavy curtains, and tapestry, the comfortable invalid chair, and wax lights, left nothing to be desired but sleep. But sleep would not come ; and when Thornhill's servant was dismissed, his master sat down opposite the fire, and remained lost in thought. Thornhill, though not a low-spirited man, nor a superstitious one, was very different from what the world gave him credit for being. It saw only the bright side of his character. Solitude could hardly be said to exhibit, but it brought out, the darker shades. He was too sensible not to know his faults, and too honest not to admit them ; but he was too weak to resist them. This produced a train of thought which usually make him sadder without making him better. To-night he was peculiarly low-spirited. Every sound irritated him : even the shutting of the doors at the end of his corridor made him vince. Then he thought of his boys ; what he might and would do for them. And a provision for Charlie, and his conversation with Marston, flashed across his mind. Then he thought

of his wife: he thought of her as Emily Carisbrooke, and again as Emily Thornhill; and he wondered whether he had quite done his duty by her; whether he might not have saved her many a heartache. Thornhill was not a coward, nor a hypocrite. I think in these moments he took a just view of his position. He never blinked a question; but it seldom resulted in permanent good. But there were few who had been so spoiled by fortune and by flattery, who would have been equally honest or more consistent.

CHAPTER VII.

TO THE COURSE.

“The rugged mountains’ scanty cloak
Was dwarfish shrubs of birch and oak.”

THE rain was over, and by nine o’clock it was as fine a May morning as ever shone upon the earth. The sun was high in heaven, and the still wet blades of grass and early hedgerow leaves were glistening like diamonds. There was a genial warmth about the day already, early as it was, which made it rather the harbinger of the coming summer than the expiring effort of departing spring. All nature rejoiced; the birds carolled blithely, as they sprang from bough to bough, or flirted merrily in the tender shadows of the opening leaves. The feeling was irresistible; and Thornhill had but little difficulty in shaking off the blue devils of the night before when he threw up his window and welcomed the morning air. Lady Marston was already at the breakfast-table, an English woman’s happiest moment, with one or two inmates of her house, whom we have not before noticed, her brother Lindsay, and a young Belgravian, scarcely of presentable age. Marston himself, too, was on the steps of his house, giving some orders about the horses, and returned to the breakfast-room just as Geoffrey Thornhill entered by an opposite door.

Breakfast is a cheerful meal in a country gentleman’s house; perhaps the most so of any. Luncheon is a scramble, a sort of voluntary, at which the sportsmen of a family never appear. Dinner, to be good and agreeable, must be attended with a

certain amount of pomposity ; and this climate is altogether too cold by seven or eight o'clock P.M. for lightness and elegance, unaccompanied by a genial warmth of magnificence and state. An English gentleman is without a rival in evening dress ; but it is the only time when an English woman may appear to throw away a chance. She will always, in point of beauty, distance foreign competition ; but candlelight gives an opening to artificial adornment, which brings a clever and unscrupulous rival near her level. Nothing has a ghost of a chance with a well-dressed English woman at a breakfast-table. And its charm of propriety and ease ; its combination of order and sociability ; even its newspaper gossip and epistolary comments, place it at the head of domestic enjoyments. It is to the day what youth is to life : somewhat too short, but a season of promise. Alas ! not always to be fulfilled.

Time is no laggard when a cheerful day's sport is before such men as Sir Frederick Marston and Geoffrey Thornhill. In half an hour they were ready for their proposed journey ; and the roan mare and the black hack having been gone some hours earlier, they prepared for an exhilarating ride through a beautiful country to Sittingdean, a village within a short distance of the course, and where their second horses awaited their arrival.

"Shall we say half an hour later for dinner, Mr. Thornhill?" said Lady Marston. "Perhaps eight o'clock will suit you and Frederick better than our usual hour down here?" insinuating gracefully that she was in the habit of making a sacrifice at the shrine of Fashion in her country house capacity. "If you are home a little earlier than you expect, you can play a game at billiards before dinner. We always do when anybody is here to play."

"Thank ye, Kate. Eight o'clock will do capitally for us," said the baronet, kissing his hand to his pretty wife and the young lady who accompanied her to the steps of the portico. "Adieu, I wish you luck," was the rejoinder. And the gentlemen were gone.

About the same time, but on the opposite side of the country, might have been seen a party of a very different kind verging towards the course. Over a long strip of common land, decked here and there with dells, and clumps of stunted box, and straggling gorse, rumbled one of those half-houses, half-waggons, drawn by a dull, badly-fed cart-horse and a thriving donkey, the common attendant on a gipsy encampment. It was accom-

panied by some half-dozen swarthy-looking Bohemians, two of whom were women, whose scarlet neckerchiefs and fantastic head-dresses proclaimed their profession. A short distance behind these came three more, apparently belonging to the former. As far as temporary association it was so, but they had either no permanent interest in the doings of the gang, or their present conversation was meant for no ears but their own. The group was a singular one. It consisted of a man, whose sharp features, high cheek-bones, and twinkling gray eyes had no characteristic of gipsy life: his face was indicative of low cunning; and his dress consisted of corduroy breeches, unbuttoned at the knee, and a blue dress-coat with metal buttons and large pockets protected by heavy lappels on the outside. His companions were a woman of about forty years of age, bearing the remains of much beauty, disfigured by intemperance of every kind, and now haggard and worn by sickness and premature decay; and a youth of about twenty, singularly athletic, finely made, and with a face which, in the midst of all its grandeur, exhibited a ferocity more like that of uncivilized life than the ordinary daring of depraved nature. There was a recklessness about him as of one smarting under wrong, and inimical to his race, which showed with wonderful contrast against the cunning, lurcher-like look of his companion.

"And where are we now?" said he, in an impatient tone. "Near the course?" And he halted to survey the scene.

"That's Sittingdean to your left, and that's the race-course to the right, where ye see the tents in the hollow; this bridle-path is the way to Stapleford over the common: but ye know the way." And here Mike Daly (for so was he called) turned with a malicious half-look towards the woman.

"Ay, ay! I know every stone and every tree of the road: it's burnt into my very soul with a scar that twenty years have never healed. What do you ask such a question for?" and her face turned almost livid as she placed her hand on her side, and her eyes flashed with an unwonted light.

"I've had my wrongs too," said Mike, "av it's not in this country. Faix, a home's a home, if it is but a pigstye, and——"

"Your wrongs, indeed!" said the woman, with a look of withering contempt at the speaker. "What do you call wrongs? Have you seen your home, as you call it, destroyed; your only parent dying with a curse on his lips for your unborn child; your hopes of happiness withered; your

love trampled on ; your very supplications for bread derided by one for whom you had sacrificed everything in this world and in the world to come?" and such was the vehemence with which the words were uttered, that Daly, accustomed as he was to such outbreaks, dropped behind, abashed at the insignificance of his own misfortunes.

"Silence, mother!" said the younger man ; "think of this world, and leave the other to take care of itself. What has it ever done for us, that we should concern ourselves about it?" And with a daring fierceness he strode onward at a pace that bid fair to distance his companions.

"Ah! like father, like son," continued the Irishman, in a sort of soliloquy. "He drove us from our homes, to get the rint ; and now——. But wait awhile, wait awhile ; it's lawyer Burke that'll see the poor man righted." And at this moment a turn in the narrow path they had been following brought them round the corner of a small covert, whence the race-course came full upon their view.

The younger man had outstripped the other two, and was now mingling with the gipsies, who regarded him with looks of distrust. He was poorly clad, and nothing but his manner of expressing himself, and a certain air of hauteur, served to separate him from the lowest grade of ruffianism. He was no sooner joined by his mother and Mike Daly than the three plunged at once into the crowd, now beginning to collect from every side. They had almost reached the course, when, in crossing one of the rides, cut in every direction through the heath, a horseman, on a small active horse, brushed rudely past, almost trampling upon the young man in his career. His left hand seized the bridle, and he raised his stick with the other, about to inflict a punishment, which might have been severe, from the formidable nature of the weapon, when a harsh cry from his mother arrested his arm, and permitted the horseman to pursue his course unmolested.

"George! George! for God's sake hold ; leave him, leave him to—to—to Heaven. Yes, yes, there is, there is a God. I was taught so once ; and he only deserted me when I deserted myself. His punishment will come soon enough ;" and the broken sobs of the woman were for some moments too violent for suppression. The man stood with one hand grasping his mother's arm, while his head was turned in the direction of his retreating foe. Every evil passion seemed

gleaming from his eye, and his face, eminently handsome as it was, had the beauty of Moloch.

"Look at him ; look, George. Shall you forget him ?"

"Do I ever forget an enemy ?"

"Is he an enemy ?" And she asked the question with a vacant look of almost insanity.

"He would have trodden us under foot, like the rest of his accursed race ; d—— him. Who or what is he, that I am not as good ?"

"He is Arthur Kildonald : my enemy, but your father."

A sullen scowl crossed his face : and his mother, rising at the same moment from a hillock on which she had sunk, he took her by the hand, and led her towards the railing which separated the stand from the course. "My father ! Arthur Kildonald ! No ; I'll not forget him. Let us be going."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RACE.

"Puncto mobilis horæ

"Nunc prece, nunc pretio, nunc vi, nunc morte supremâ,
Permutet dominos et cedat in altera jura."—HOR., *Ep. il.*

THE bell had already twice rung for saddling : and the two races had been run rather to the disappointment of the gentlemen and the success of the professional bookmakers. In the first race an outsider had won by the jockeyship, as was asserted, of Kildonald ; in the second the favourite had been defeated on the post by a beaten horse, and the race pulled out of the fire. In the interval between speculation on the coming event, the Corinthian Handicap, the race of the day, the conversation turned partly on the merits of the horses, partly on that of the riders. So public a character as a gentleman rider courts criticism, and generally has his share of it.

"Captain Kildonald made a fine race of that, Sir Frederick," said a neat-looking, well-whiskered individual, with a small betting-book in his hand, and a tooth-pick in his mouth. "He never took a liberty with his 'oss, and they all come back to him at last. He's a nasty beggar to ride, for he wants you to get all you can out of him, and you mustn't get it out too fast."

"He rode the horse very well, very well indeed, Smithson," replied the baronet: "few men can ride better. There's many a jockey might give *him* 5 lb.; but he scarcely looks himself to-day, somehow or other."

"He leads such a life."

"Does he. What is it—play?"

"Bless you, yes!" said the man who was called Smithson, who was a good sort of fellow, and found living by his wits easier and pleasanter than behind a counter, the natural sphere of his operations; "bless you, yes! Play! all night and all day. He must have some pretty good nerve left to live as he does."

"Do anything, Sir Frederick? Want to back your colt?" said a yellow-looking, stout, heavy-jowled man, in shiny black clothes, and a most respectable look, who had been a stocking-weaver in the midland counties, and was now the largest better on the Turf.

"Nothing more, thank you, Pearson. I've backed him for all I intend; and I hope he'll win."

"Well, Dorrington, what have you done about Benevenuto?"

"Backed him like the devil," said Lord Dorrington to his inquirer. "It's a comfort to know that he's *meant*. He *does* belong to a gentleman, and he'll be well ridden."

"He's a very easy horse to ride," said the young Marquis of Droughtmore, himself no mean performer over a country, though a little too heavy for the flat. "He has a great turn of speed, and comes when he's called upon. Are you staying here, Dorrington?"

"Yes, at Henry Corry's. It's about three miles from here, across the heath. We have Seymour, Putney, Wilbraham, and that spectral *attaché*, Royston's friend; I forget his name. He's asleep now, I believe; but he comes out with the bats for his rubber, and seems to begin enjoying himself when everybody else is about going to bed."

"What a handsome gipsy!" said Wilbraham, who just joined them, pointing to the figure of an athletic-looking young fellow, with magnificent eyes, who was apparently watching some knock-'em-downs, but kept the corner of his eye stealthily upon somebody unseen by the party in question. "He'd do to put into training to lick Mildmay's pet for 200*l*. Come, Thornhill, you back the Bohemian, and we'll put him into form in no time. Why he must be six feet two, if he's an inch; and what a pair

of shoulders ! His face reminds me of somebody. You are not handsome enough, Dorrington, or I should say it was you."

At that very moment, mounted on the gray colt, led by Turner, Sir Frederic Marston's trainer, and looking the perfection of a gentleman jockey, came Arthur Kildonald. He was a tall, singularly good-looking man, but very spare. His length of thigh gave him a great appearance of power, as well as ease upon his horse ; and it was plain to see that what strength he had was above the saddle. He was beautifully dressed ; and his colours, dark purple and buff, became him admirably. It was impossible not to notice him. At the best of times his face was not a good face : it wanted honesty of expression, with all its beauty. Now it was deadly pale, and wore a troubled look. Not far from the horse, amid the crowd that walked by his side admiring his condition, and entering a last bet upon the race, was our old acquaintance Mr. Burke. To a very close observer, one significant glance passed between the latter and Kildonald, before he was lost in the crowd. At the same instant Lord Dorrington turned suddenly from the gipsy to the rider. The likeness was sufficiently manifest : there was but the difference between the savage and the civilised man, *au reste* the resemblance was complete.

I have already said that the Bidborough Meeting was select rather than large. It embraced country gentlemen in the Stand, their carriages and wives on the opposite side of the course. The great earl was there, talking to Thornhill, Sir Frederick Marston, and a few more of equal rank. The labourers, servants, and artisans of the neighbourhood appeared in more than a just proportion ; their smiles and many-coloured ribbons were the pleasantest part of the scene. The great betting men were there, including the nobility and gentry of England, the real patrons of the Turf : the idlers who backed their fancy for a pony were there in great numbers. The fine, independent, top-booted farmer and yeoman appeared in great force ; and in smaller numbers the *mimi*, *balatrones*, *et hoc genus omne*. Half-a-dozen drags, contained the votaries of Limmer's and of Long's ; Brookes', White's, and the Clarendon rejoiced in the Stand. The small betting man was not to be found : there was no place for the minor bookmaker, for the lawyer's clerk, and the embryo City man. The importance of the meeting was not sufficient to startle them from their propriety.

I write of a day when the chief proprietors of race-horses

were to be found amongst the nobles and gentlemen of England. Horse-racing had not yet become a simple trade. It was presumed that the object of a starter was to win. There were rogues, as there have been before and since the days of Dan Dawson ; there was a genius or two emerging from the crowd, whose capabilities for calculation and the king's English were scarcely on a par. But racing was not yet the business of a nation, and the pleasure of the few ; what betting there was, was done *con amore*. It was heavy and earnest, as of men backing a conviction rather than hedging a speculation. *Nous avons changé tout cela.*

The course was being rapidly cleared. Policemen were active, and the huntsmen and whips of the Bidborough Union Foxhounds were forming a serried rank of inquisitive yokels some distance below the Stand. The ladies were closing their glove books, and eagerly expecting the race of the day. The last dog had already cleared the course by at least five minutes. Three horses had gone down besides Benevenuto : two were entirely out of it, and the third had nothing but an outside chance against Sir Frederick's horse. The preliminary canter confirmed preconceived notions, and the race was a foregone conclusion. One chance alone remained to the fielders : that Kildonald should make use of his horse all the way, and having alternately raced with each, should finally come back to them. Kildonald was not a likely man to play his adversaries' game, when he knew so well the cards that were out.

They're off ! The multitude hold their breath : a murmur : they come : the gray winning. "By heavens ! what's Kildonald about ? he's at work already ; Castleton wins. No, by Jove ! the gray does it now. Castleton, Marston ; d—— it, he's stopped him !" shrieks Lord Dorrington and twenty more voices at the same moment, as the mare, quietly ridden by Lord Castleton, is landed a winner by a neck. "It's a cursed robbery !" "It's a swindle !" "He could scarcely help winning, as it was !" "An infernal piece of rascality from beginning to end !" And epithets not complimentary, and curses both loud and deep, were uttered against the rider of Benevenuto, as he rode to scale. It was all over ; and the blank looks and empty pockets of the Grand Stand told quite plainly enough that the robbery was none of theirs. Kildonald, amidst the yells of the populace, and half protected from personal injury by the police, entered the Stand. His lips were quivering with suppressed passion, and every

muscle of his pale face worked with rage. Turning sharply round, his eye lit upon Geoffrey Thornhill, who was replying in no measured terms to the condolences of the men by whom he was surrounded. He glared like a tiger, and, forcing his way towards him, demanded in tones scarcely audible, but hissing from between his teeth, whether he applied that epithet to him.

"I echo, sir, the sentiment of every man on the course who ever saw a race in his life, when I repeat that it is an infernal robbery;" and as he spoke, Thornhill's face, before rather expressive of disappointment, coloured with an effort to control his temper.

"Liar?" rejoined the other, now utterly beside himself; and as he spoke he raised his right hand, in which he held the whip with which he had been riding, and made a blow at his antagonist. His arm was instantly seized, but not before the whip had slightly grazed his cheek. An insult so gross drove all power of restraint from Geoffrey Thornhill, and with one blow he knocked Kildonald into the arms of a by-stander. The quarrel was too unseemly to proceed; the friends of either party hurried them away; and whilst Geoffrey Thornhill rejoined his friends in the Stand, Kildonald mounted his hack and rode straight to the cottage of an acquaintance with whom he was staying, about half an hour's walk from the course.

"You were imprudent, Thornhill," said Marston, some two hours later, when every trace of passion had left his friend Geoffrey, and nothing remained but a consideration of his position in the quarrel.

"I was. But to be first robbed of a very large stake in a most palpable manner, and then struck by such a ruffian as that, is trying." And Thornhill blushed again at the recollection of the indignity.

"Admitted. But why have struck that unfortunate blow? He must leave the country; and your expressions no man can gainsay, though some may blame."

"Good heavens! Marston, how you do talk. Is a man to lose several thousands by such rascality, and stand by and profess to respect it? I had no idea that Kildonald would have heard me; but as it was a robbery, and I had said so, it would not have been dignified to have denied it."

"That was impossible, and now *que faire*." At that moment a gentlemanly-looking man, well known on the Turf and in society as a Major Doyle, a mutual acquaintance of Kildonald

and Thornhill, of irreproachable character, approached and said, in a grave measured tone, "I beg your pardon for the unpleasant intrusion, but my instructions leave me no alternative. I am desired by Mr. Kildonald to state that he remains at my house, which is on the heath, and barely two miles from here, until he can have the necessary arrangements for a meeting with Mr. Thornhill. The exigencies of the case preclude all apology, and demand as much despatch as possible."

"Accept my excuses, Major Doyle, for not at once receiving you by appointing a friend to confer with you. The circumstances are such as to require consideration, and I will forward a note or send a friend this evening to your house." The Major raised his hat with an elegance characteristic of an Irish gentleman, and Thornhill replied by a bow as distant as courtesy permits.

"Marston, I should ask you to do me the greatest favour that one man can do for another ; but one friend older than yourself in length of friendship, and older than either of us in years, must be consulted."

"But you will not fight him?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Why he's a swindler—a common blackleg"

"We say so. But, remember, he has a little world of his own, which will not believe it. Unfortunately it is not capable of direct proof, and we have only acted on our convictions. Yes ; I must fight him."

"What, then, do you propose?"

"Go home to Lady Marston ; keep your own counsel and mine. I shall ride round by Corry's : he is the best fellow alive in cases of this sort. He has had hundreds of them on his hands. He will give me some dinner, see Major Doyle this very evening, and I shall be with you two or three hours later than otherwise. Your hack will not take long going from Sittingdean, which I can reach from Henry Corry's by the lower side of the heath. Adieu, my dear Marston. Let's send your groom for the horses, and I'll be off. The last race will be over by the time they are at the back of the stand."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHALLENGE.

“Captain, I thee beseech to do me favours.”—SHAKESPEARE, *Henry V.*

WHEN Geoffrey Thornhill had mounted his hack, and desired Marston to tell them at Sittingdean that he should be there by ten or half past, he turned with a loose rein over one of the by-paths of the heath, which led amongst clumps of firs and broken patches of sand and gorse to the villas and country-houses scattered over the face of the landscape. The sun was setting; and at another time Thornhill would have probably given a passing thought to the beauty of the scene, or to its adaptability for fox-hunting. He might have admired his clean-shaped, active hack, as he picked his way over the stony and sandy road before him. At present his mind was engrossed with other matter. He had lost a sum of money he could ill spare at the moment; but “Sufficient to the day” was a favourite proverb of Thornhill’s, as it is of many a man in pecuniary matters. No man understood the philosophy of money better than he—at least, if spending or losing it with a cheerful indifference constitute philosophy. He was constitutionally courageous too; and though he was impulsive, and apt to say things which he sometimes regretted, he never shrank from their consequences. His was the regret of a noble mind sorry for having inflicted pain on others, rather than for its effects upon himself. He was not a man to abstain from injustice, or to shrink from acknowledging it.

If a man is ever justified in egotism, it is when he sees a probability or possibility of being shot through the body within the next four-and-twenty hours. Geoffrey Thornhill saw that possibility very plainly before him; and his constitutional courage did not serve to shut out the prospect. The consequence was a gloomy ride to Corry’s, in which he peopled the world with his wife and his boys. He rang the bell, and asked if Mr. Corry was at home. He was, and was about to dine: but Mr. Thornhill’s card should be taken to him. In a minute the servant returned with a request that he would sit down for five minutes; Mr. Corry was dressing. The five minutes

elapsed before he had sufficiently admired a Titian, a very fine copy (to Thornhill it made very little difference), when Harry Corry appeared.

"Delighted to see you, Thornhill, delighted ; we dine directly," said he, ringing the bell. "Mr. Thornhill will dine with us, Thompson ; and desire Gregory to see to his horse. We've only three or four men here whom you know. Like wash your hands ? come with me."

"I beg you a thousand pardons, my dear Corry ; but I must have five words with you at once."

"No, not a word ; nothing before dinner on any consideration : we have just a soup, a fish, and a haunch ; an early one from your old friend Lascelles." With these words he hurried Geoffrey Thornhill into a dressing-room, and left him to make his ablutions.

Henry Corry was a man better known almost than anyone in London. He was a bachelor of moderate fortune, good family, and heir to an earldom. He was a man of exquisite taste ; his dinners and his pictures were few, but excellent. He associated generally with men younger than himself. His conversation amused, and his highly-bred quiet restrained them. His reputation as a man of the world was at its height ; and there was no one to whom men, in difficulty, would apply with more certain prospect of a solution. In all matters connected with fighting or the women, he was an arbiter from whose dictum there was no appeal.

The dinner was good, as well it might be, from the care bestowed upon it ; the conversation as vapid as might have been expected from a certain restraint arising from Thornhill's presence. Every one was anxious to put him at his ease on the subject evidently uppermost in his thoughts ; but the very desire to do so produced a constraint, unnatural to any of the party. Corry himself, not having been at the races, was sublimely ignorant of the whole transaction, and set down the loss of spirit to the loss of money ; though he admitted to himself that it was something new in the constitution of Geoffrey Thornhill or Lord Dorrington. "They must have been soundly hit," thought he.

"That's a good picture over the mantelpiece," said Wilbraham, a traveller, and would-be connoisseur.

"I think it is ; it's the only Claude I have here. That and the Titian, with a couple of Watteaus in the small drawing-room, with half a dozen of less value, are all I have in this place."

"What a charming repose!" said Mr. Hammond, the spectral *attaché* before mentioned, who seemed himself to have just awakened out of a sound nap. "That small Spanish picture in my room, I presume a Murillo, has one of the most beautiful faces I ever saw."

"Talking of faces, what a splendid face was that gipsy boy's whom we saw on the course to-day, just before the race. Dorrington found out a likeness, and a very remarkable one;" and here the speaker, quite a young man, blushed, on remembering to whom the resemblance related.

Thornhill hastened to relieve his embarrassment. "Yes, I noticed the likeness myself, talking to Lord Bidborough, as Kildonald rode down. That's an admirable haunch of yours, Henry Corry. You were not on the heath to-day?"

"No! but I took a walk about a couple of miles to the right of the course, and I rather think I saw Putney's handsome gipsy; he was not far from Doyle's cottage at the time, and seemed to be looking after something—the poultry, I suppose. But, Geoffrey, I beg your pardon, I know you told me you wanted to speak to me; and now that we can leave these men with such a good substitute as that bottle of Lafitte, I dare say they'll excuse us for five minutes, before we make up our rubber." With these words the host rose slowly, and Thornhill and he left the room.

"And now, my dear fellow, how can I oblige you? I see there is something wrong." And Thornhill related to him the occurrences of the day.

"This is unfortunate: three days hence you may be able to treat him with contempt, if the world looks upon it in the same light that you do. To-day it is impossible!" and he rang the bell. "Order the brougham round, directly."

"Yes, sir;" and the man disappeared.

"Now, Geoffrey, go down to those men, and wait for me. I shall be gone half an hour."

No sooner were Corry and Thornhill gone to the drawing-room, than the tongues were unloosed, and they began to speak plainly. "He must fight, I suppose," said Lord Dorrington, who, however, helped himself to a bumper of claret with as much *nonchalance*, as if fighting was the ordinary occupation of the species.

"I should rather say not," said Putney, who had lately been gazetted to a troop in the —th Hussars. "One don't fight with

robbers; at least it's optional; and Kildonald is a robber to all intents and purposes, as much as if he stole my purse." And here the junior captain yawned at his unwonted exertion. "Much more so if the extent of the plunder is taken into consideration; but Thornhill will fight: he has most chivalrous notions on such points."

"He's in good hands, at all events. The claret, please, Wilbraham. When Kildonald is shot, there'll be one scoundrel less in the world, at all events, and we can very well spare him." Here the door opened, and Thornhill re-entered the room.

In the meantime the brougham had driven rapidly towards another part of the heath, and after an application to the bell, Henry Corry descended at the door of Major Doyle's cottage.

"My compliments to Major Doyle, and I shall be glad to speak to him on business of importance;" and Corry tendered his card—whilst through the narrow passage of the house came an occasional ominous rattle of dice; and as the adjoining door opened, something like "Eleven's the nick," smote on his ear, "Ah!" thought the sobered man of the world, "now that there is no one left to devour till to-morrow, they are preying upon each other. Good heavens! to think that a man like Thornhill must place himself upon a level with these men, whose hand is against every man, and whose reputation is not worth half an hour's purchase. Major Doyle, I presume," said he, seeing that a gentleman had entered the room almost suddenly enough to extinguish his cogitations.

"Major Doyle, at your service," replied that individual.

"My business is pressing, Major Doyle, and unpleasant. With its purport you are already acquainted, when I say I come from my friend, Mr. Thornhill, of Thornhills." Here both gentlemen stopped and looked at one another with considerable uneasiness.

"I fear your mission can have but one result."

"I cannot affect to misunderstand the necessity. It will be needless for us to enter into the cause of this unhappy quarrel—but the sooner the meeting can take place the better."

"It gives me pleasure to meet with such promptness," said the major, whose Irish propensity was about to be indulged so unhesitatingly, and partly anxious about the loss of a day's racing.

"And me pain!" rejoined the other, who saw neither credit nor profit to his man in being first swindled and then shot.

The two gentlemen, however, being so far *d'accord*, laid their

heads together, and were not long in making such arrangements for the following morning, as to give the major plenty of time for the transaction of his favourite business, before the calls of his favourite diversion.

When Henry Corry returned to his house, he at once sought Geoffrey Thornhill. He was playing a rubber, and finished it as unconcernedly as he would have done, had his friend returned with an invitation to dinner. Thornhill's was a strong, perhaps an uncommon mind; it never utterly refused to see things in their true light, but carefully postponed the prospect to the latest moment. Perhaps I am wrong in saying that it was a strong mind; the action of it was in this respect almost involuntary. It was not the true courage, the philosophy of determinate indifference to a distant though certain result; but rather an habitual carelessness of the future, and an abandonment to the present. It was some physiological deficiency or phrenological defect—perhaps of judgment—which refused to consider a case at all, until positively called on for trial. It increased his popularity, gave him a character for daring, and, to a man of his peculiar habits and temper, saved him and caused him much inconvenience in every way. It is but due to him to add, that when he took the trouble to realize a hard position, he acted with a characteristic boldness, which was not the less genuine because he recognised the reality and extent of his danger.

"My dear Thornhill," said Corry, taking him into an adjoining room when the rubber was over, "knowing your determination to return to Marston's to-night, instead of sleeping here, as I wish you to do, I have succeeded in arranging matters for to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. At the ninth milestone on the Sittingdean road, between this and Marston's, I will meet you to-morrow morning at half-past seven; we can go in my carriage, and you can send Marston's back to the "Royal Oak." To avoid exciting suspicion, Major Doyle will come at the back of Sittingdean, by another road; Kildonald sleeps at Sittingdean to-night, and he will pick him up on his way to-morrow. I know you too well, my dear fellow, to impress upon you punctuality in such a matter; and you know me well enough to tell me whether there's anything else in this business in which I can be of service to you. In case of accident, the place is the back of the old ruin in Owlston Park, and the time eight o'clock."

"Thank you, thank you, Corry, a thousand times; and now let me ring for my horse."

CHAPTER X.

HOMEWARD.

“L’homme propose et Dieu dispose.”

WHEN Geoffrey Thornhill started on his road to Sittingdean the moon was not yet up. The first mile or two from the cottage he was leaving, the road was tolerably good ; and the night not being absolutely dark, he pushed on at a rapid pace, not less in accordance with a sort of feverish anxiety, than from a wish to reach his temporary home as early as possible. The atmosphere, however, was still and heavy ; and he was not long before he felt the heat somewhat oppressively. As the road advanced into the common it became more full of holes and ruts ; and mindful of the possibility of laming his horse at such a distance from the village where he expected his second hack, he pulled him into a walk, and allowed him to pick his way at leisure. Having once stopped the pace he was going, his mind took the thoughtful tone which accorded more with the rate of speed to which he was now reduced. He lit a cigar, and at that moment the moon rose over the tops of the low fir trees which skirted the road irregularly on either side. Thornhill knew the road pretty well, though he could scarcely be said to be familiar with it. He remembered that for about a mile the deep sandy lane with heavy blocks of loose sandstone, and a steep and dark bank on either side, overgrown with gorse bushes and heather, with stunted trees, terminated in a very sharp descent. From this place on so light a night, the whole was capital galloping ground into the road by Sittingdean, from which place an hour and a half’s sharp riding on a fresh horse would bring him to his journey’s end. He could the better then afford a quarter of an hour’s leisurely riding, whilst he smoked his cigar : and conned his position and his course of action for the morrow.

His thoughts could not well be cheerful : they turned naturally towards his home ; for though a thorough man of pleasure he was warm-hearted and impulsive. His love for his children was genuine and deep, and his pride in his eldest boy, his accomplishments and his person, was unalloyed by any selfish feeling. Had Thornhill been less spoiled by the world, he would

have better appreciated the happiness of his home. He had married a woman amiable, good, elegant, with country tastes and habits, and an intense admiration for her husband, but deficient in any strong attraction either of character or of manner. Exercising but little influence in her house, over either her husband or her children, Mrs. Thornhill had sailed calmly down the stream, an admirable example to her neighbours, a good village Lady Bountiful, a favourite with everybody, but with no power to divert from its current or to check in its career a strong stream of careless profusion, and selfish pleasure and indulgence, which was the more dangerous as it was joined to some estimable and many popular qualities. "Ah! if my nephew Geoffrey had but married Lady Marston, or a woman like that," said old Lady Chesterton, the ruling providence of the county and the great agent for matrimonial alliances in the midland counties; and the suggestion was echoed by all Thornhill's well-wishers. They probably knew nothing about it; but it is just possible that he might have been a better man, and Emily Carisbrooke a happier woman. I presume Lady Marston was considered equal to the emergency.

In this fit of blue devils, rather than in serious meditation, Thornhill rode on. Having cleared the worst part of the road, he had reached the very steep descent between the scattered firs and box which threw a gloom over this part of the heath, and was just beginning the descent, when we leave him to turn to others whose interest in the story is greater.

One hour before he had started from Henry Corry's villa, two persons appeared in the lower part of the heath, having apparently walked from the neighbourhood of Sittingdean. They had not really done so. The reader has been already made acquainted with them. They were Mike Daly and George. They seemed, by the road they were taking, to be making the best of their way across the heath, towards the gipsy encampments in the close neighbourhood of or on the course itself, ready for the morrow. By this route they would cross the road which Geoffrey Thornhill must follow on his way to Sittingdean, as that was the only horse road, the bridle cuts being invisible and quite useless in the dark to any but foot passengers, and they tolerably acquainted with them.

"Hist, George, aisy; I hear a step."

"No such thing," said George, in a hoarse whisper, which trembled with emotion; "He can't be here this two hours or

more ; he was not likely to start till eleven or later. What's the hour ? ”

“ By the night, about half-past nine or ten.”

“ Then halt here ; he must pass by this road ; there's no wind, and we can hear every sound that stirs. These tall dark firs would hide Satan himself,” and as he spoke he seated himself under a tree within ten paces of the narrow defile to which I have before alluded. Mike did the same.

“ What did Lawyer Burke do at the races, Mike ? He ought to pay ye well for this job.”

“ It's the good name he has in Kerry, anyhow ; sure he's the poor man's frind ; he won't see me want.”

“ He's a scoundrel, Mike ; a low, beggarly scoundrel, that gets the oyster and throws you the shells.” Here George listened once more, but nothing was to be heard, and he resumed his listless attitude against the tree.

“ How do ye know his time, Master George ? Maybe he's gone, and I'll never have such a chance again. I'll be able to leave the country entirely.”

“ How do I know his time ? I've been to the cottage, and where there are women you may know anything.” George was a bit of a philosopher, and a close observer of human nature.

“ Now I hear a horse,” said he, as a slow even step, occasionally striking a stone, and breaking into a momentary jog, smote his ear. “ It's close at hand, Mike, steady ; ” and they simultaneously rose and approached the edge of the road, under cover of the firs.

About an hour or rather more after Thornhill had left Henry Corry's villa, the stable-gates of Major Doyle's unpretending tenement, which was rented for the race-week by himself and a betting-man or two, opened ; and there issued from them a smart, clever-looking hack, carrying no other than Arthur Kil-donald. The moon was now up, and the way lay clearer than in the earlier part of the evening. The gambler's face was pale, and the passion which tore him found ready vent in accelerated pace. His reflections were not pleasant ; he held, it is true, in Burke's note of hand for 3000*l.* a means of escape from this country ; but the deliberate robbery of which he had been guilty in the morning would have necessitated that absence since its discovery, and carried with it some very painful inconveniences. He would fain have retired like a graceful actor, regretted for the time, and with a hope of an occasional return. All his hatred,

too, for Geoffrey Thornhill, his absurd and mistaken prejudices against him as the purchaser of his Irish property, and his fear of his bold and resolute nature, lashed him into a fury, as he trotted sharply over the uneven ground that entered upon the road over the heath. One other circumstance had not escaped his notice ; amongst his own set he had lost caste. It's a bad thing to be found out. He had committed a robbery, but he had never committed a palpable blunder before. Besides Major Doyle, perhaps, scarcely one of the party he had left would have hesitated to do what he had done. They attached no more discredit to the fact than, scarcely indeed so much as, he did himself ; but they bore very hardly upon the discovery of it, and regarded it as a serious blow to the party. This was not a pleasant subject of contemplation ; he was to be let down by his own set ; and though Major Doyle's notions of honour forbade him to desert his late guest, Kildonald felt the terms on which he was to have the major's countenance in his meeting with Geoffrey Thornhill. The duel itself was one in which no credit could accrue to him. His opponent was too popular a man to be shot at with impunity ; and now the quarrel, though unavoidable, was of his own seeking. " Fool, fool ! " said he to himself, " why was not I deaf or dumb ? why did my accursed ill luck throw me in the way of that villain Burke ? and poor Norah and the boy ; good God ! if anything happens to-morrow, what's to become of them ? I must trust Doyle." In this spirit he rapidly neared the dark and broken descent whither we conducted Geoffrey Thornhill, and on the side of which we left standing Mike Daly and George in the shade of the dark trees. Already was he at the top of the descent which the others had reached some time before ; forgetful of the badness of the road, which for a hundred yards was almost perpendicular, he was already urging his horse to continued speed, when with a fearful plunge and a violent snort which would have unseated a worse horseman, thus unexpectedly, the hack refused to proceed.

The whist party which we left at Henry Corry's was not one to be disturbed by ordinary circumstances. It consisted of pure men of the world ; not without natural feelings, certainly not without refinement, but well exercised by constant friction against society, which hardened while it polished. Corry himself was depressed more than might have been expected by an episode of less rare occurrence than in the present day. The four or five men who surrounded the card-table divided their

attention more than usually between unpleasant anticipations and their cards ; but as the stakes were high, it can hardly be said that the former had so much of their attention as the latter.

"Five pounds on the rubber, Corry," said Wilbraham, who had been silent some time, in deference to his host, but who felt compelled to say something pleasant to break the silence.

"Certainly. Which do you wish to back ?"

"Dorrington, of course ; he always holds cards."

"Be it so ;" and Henry Corry again relapsed into silence. He was leaning against the mantelpiece, with his back to a small fire, which had been lighted during dinner. The room in which they were playing was furnished in a most elaborate manner. All that money, combined with taste, could command, was to be met with there. The ornaments were of the most refined character. Sèvres china of the most beautiful description ; statuettes from the choicest originals ; marqueterie and ormolu, with handsome mirrors proportioned to the moderate dimensions of the room ; few pictures, as has been said, but valuable, and handsomely bound works of the best authors ; rich hangings, and luxurious chairs of various shapes and kinds, combined comfort with elegance, seldom to be met with in a country villa so far removed from large cities. It might have been the retreat of a modern Mæcenas, or the consolation of a fallen minister, or bankrupt merchant.

"How's the game, Seymour ?"

"Dorrington and I win the trick : we are four to three, and a single up. At present your fiver looks well."

"The room's hot," said Corry. "Would you like a window opened for five or ten minutes ? Putney, are you afraid of the draught ?"

"Not I," said the captain. Corry opened a window partially, which looked on to the lawn. At the same moment a horse came down the road from the heath at a fearful pace, and a ring at the door-bell announced an unexpected guest. Sharp, quick, and agitated tones of enquiry were heard in the hall, and as the servant threw open the door without the announcement of any name, an unwelcome figure stood before the astonished party.

It was Kildonald. Notwithstanding the pace he had evidently ridden, his face was perfectly ghastly : large drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, his hair was matted with damp, and hung in dishevelled locks over his brows ; terror

seemed to have utterly taken away his speech, for he reeled and staggered into a chair, with scarcely ability to say, "Quick—quick, for God's sake ! Thornhill——" Here the whist-players rose, and Henry Corry came forward with a cold and resolute manner, saying, "to what, sir, am I to attribute this honour ? pray explain." But he was cut short by Kildonald, who repeated in more collected, but no less earnest tones, "Thornhill is murdered ! Quick—quick, gentlemen. Villains have been beforehand : his blood be upon their heads, not mine. He lies on the road by the glen, four or five miles from here, before you come to the Sittingdean road. Pray send out at once. But it's too late." The bell was rung.

"Gregory, saddle Lord Dorrington's mare and my hack instantly ; and tell Jervis to bring round the brougham again. Mr. Kildonald's horse is at the door." Here Henry Corry followed his servant out of the room. "And let one of the men on whom you can depend go down to the nearest constable, and bring him up here, to wait till our return."

In ten minutes' time they were on the road, the brougham following them, as best it could, over the rugged road to the scene of the terrible catastrophe.

And there on the road, at the top of the descent, beneath a dark mass of firs and box, lay the lifeless body of Geoffrey Thornhill.

CHAPTER XI.

TIME FOR REFLECTION.

"Pompa mortis magis terret quam mors ipsa."

So terrible and unprovoked a fate creates alarm under the most ordinary circumstances. The excitement is not lessened when the victim is wealthy, popular, and high-born. In the present case there was something doubly terrible. The next day he might have had on his own hands the blood of a fellow-creature ; though the amount of guilt in the one case would have borne but a small proportion, in the eyes of the world, to that of the other.

It is our happiness to live in a day when the true courage of a Christian gentleman may exhibit itself in declining to risk his life, or to risk taking the life of another. This relic of barbarous chivalry has passed away from before us. Whether we are to thank increasing civilization for the boon ; a more plentiful admixture of middle-class blood, with its prejudices in favour of long life and respectability, amongst the more chivalrous, but less considerate successors of Norman aristocracy ; or the softening influence of a woman's court—of a court that teaches the distinction between the true and the false, the glitter of base metal and the sterling ring of the solid, by the happiest example, it is not for us to say. We are satisfied with the fact: and if there still remains an argument or two for the admirers of the duel, in the difficulty of meting out a proper punishment for certain offences, we can always reply that there is a higher chivalry, and a more enduring courage which enables us to bear.

The coroner's inquest returned a verdict in accordance with the evidence—"Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown." They could make nothing of it. That Kildonald was an object of much suspicion is not to be wondered at. The evidence at first was so strong that the magistrates were much censured for not having committed him to take his trial. After continued remands, and very heavy bail, it was found necessary to discharge him. Two of three circumstances spoke strongly in his favour—or rather against the supposition of his having committed the murder.

First of all it was very clear that Arthur Kildonald had left Major Doyle's house long after the time that Geoffrey Thornhill had quitted Henry Corry and his guests. Indeed, it might have been presumed that Thornhill was already near upon Sittingdean. There was also a strong presumption that Kildonald went out unarmed ; whilst it was clear that the murder was committed with a pistol, though the weapon remained undiscovered. The idea even that the former had waited for him, and fell as the result of an equal combat, was negatived by the fact that a blow of a very violent character had been given on the temple, though death was caused by the bullet, which had penetrated the brain. The two men had no means of ascertaining the movements of each other, and were not likely to have anticipated by a few hours the vengeance which the morning would have accorded them. The purse and watch of Thornhill had either escaped the vigilance of the assassin, or were purposely overlooked ; his

betting book, and a small pocket-book which he usually carried, were gone. In a word, an impenetrable mystery veiled the event, which grew no lighter as time rolled on. The gipsies were not forgotten; and a few desperate characters who frequented the heath about race-time were taken before the Bidborough justices, but nothing could be made of them; and before the end of a month the town and neighbourhood had resumed their wonted stupidity and quiet. A murder a month would have scarcely made it habitable.

It was not long before the recollection of Thornhill and his many accomplishments was confined to the police and his own immediate friends and family. Lord Dorrington and his set went their ways, some to their farms, none to their merchandise. The covers were still at Thornhills; they still held pheasants and foxes; and the new heir would probably take back the hounds when he came of age: and the widow in the meantime would issue the customary invitations, and Thornhills would be the same, the master only excepted.

"Terrible business, that death of poor Thornhill," said Captain Boldthrow, on the steps of Crockford's, a month or two after the catastrophe. "It must have quite spoilt Corry's Bidborough party. The widow's jointure is small, rather. She has the manor-house and 1200*l.* a-year."

"Charming woman!" rejoined his companion, Dicky Calthorpe of the Blues. "Twelve hundred a-year is not to be got every day. By the way, Dorrington, do you know the lost betting book has come to light in a very mysterious manner? It came directed to Marston, from Dublin; and it seems to have been given to the guard of the Cork mail by a fellow in a la' iver's dress, as they changed horses at some place or other. I'm afraid it will break up our shooting party for next year. Does anyone know anything about that big brown horse of Thornhill's, that carried him so well in the Cottesmore country last year?"

"Nobody knows more about him than you, Calthorpe. He left you all, as if you were standing still. At least, so Castleton declares; and he was the only one within a quarter of a mile of him."

"Well! he'll be sold on Monday week with the rest of them; they're none of them to be kept. I met his brother, the banker, just this minute in Pall Mall, and he told me all about it. He and Marston are the trustees."

And by the time the horses were sold, and the season came round again, "the best fellow in the world" was as much forgotten, almost, as if he had never existed.

But there were others whose memories were not so short. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston had not ceased to sorrow for their old friend, and lavished their regrets in affection for his widow and children. The shock to Mrs. Thornhill had been great indeed. She hung over their early days, and wondered whether she had done all she might have done to make the home of Geoffrey Thornhill what it ought to have been. God bless her ! she tried to discover a fault where none existed, and to hide some provocations which had been too apparent until now. And the boys often looked back to their last parting, when their indulgent, good-humoured father left them, Tom on the bridge at Eton, and Charlie at the office of the S—— coach, as he started him on his journey to Dr. Gresham : they little thought for the last time. "*Sublatum ex oculis quærimus invidi.*" Amiable as he was he had never appeared so amiable as now.

But time, the great assuager of ills, wrought its usual effect. The boys returned to school. Tom plunged into every amusement, and, gifted with great capacity, was equally a favourite with the masters as with his schoolfellows. He exhibited a disposition singularly akin to that of his father. He was eminently handsome, and already began to appreciate the advantages of his social position. Notwithstanding the democratic tendency of its institutions, there is no place where a boy so soon discovers the power and influence that wealth and high birth confer. It was impossible, too, for a clever, intelligent boy like Tom Thornhill not to see that his father's death had made a sensible difference in the estimation in which he was held. Most persons are ready enough to worship the rising sun : not the less so when unobscured by clouds. As a youngster everyone was ready to give him a construe, or to do his verses ; nobody fagged him ; as to cleaning other boots, he could have found those who would almost have licked his own. As he grew older, he became the fashion : the sincerest flattery is imitation. They copied his dress, his manner, and his slang ; his juniors admired him, his equals courted him, and his seniors delighted to honour him. His name was in every mouth. There was nothing too good for him, nothing he could not do ; and if a too confident parent ventured during the holidays to sound the praises of man, woman, or child, the answer was, invariably, "You should just

see Tom Thornhill." Is it wonderful if his mother regarded him with intense admiration? And we may be pretty sure that her friends and neighbours were made to participate in her pleasure. Even old Lady Chesterton, with her sombre beard and impracticable crutched stick, was obliged to admit that, if he was half what he was represented, they should never find a wife for him.

At his father's death it had been ascertained that Charlie was just beyond the age at which he could be received at Eton. It was wisely determined that he should return to Dr. Gresham. S—— was at that time, if not so *recherché*, to the full as eminent as Eton. Its numbers, it is true, were not more than half that of that fashionable institution; but its scholarship and its flogging were equal, if not superior, to anything of its day. Dr. Gresham himself was a man of most brilliant talent, sound learning, and, rarer still, of varied accomplishments, which great scholarship, for some reason or other, was generally supposed to exclude. But he was more than this. He was a most admirable schoolmaster, combining a happy playfulness of disposition with a power of influencing young minds to an almost incredible extent. Into these hands Mrs. Thornhill, by the advice of her executors, confided her younger son.

The distinguishing feature in Charlie Thornhill, as at present exhibited, was a lively distaste to every species of learning. To say for what he had or had not talent, was equally difficult. He hated classics; but this cannot be said to have implied any love for mathematics; his contempt for the models of antiquity was quite unaccompanied by any regard for modern literature. The leading article of the "Times" and the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments" alike failed to excite any warmer feelings than sheer indifference. His principal reading was culled from "Bell's Life," and the sporting periodical literature of the day; but if he could indulge in cricket, boating, a run with the beagles, or even the more modest pleasures of a rat hunt, out of school, he seldom denied himself those enjoyments for the sake of any literature whatever. He usually managed to get off, however, without getting on, and did sufficient, or allowed others to do sufficient for him, to keep his place in the school. With all this love of exercise and sport, he might rather be said to be determined than energetic. He never entered even on his amusements rashly, but with a coolness and precision which gave them the dignity of a principle. He was the most popular boy in the

school : not exactly in the same way as his brother Tom, who took popularity by storm, but by a sort of persevering good temper and a just discrimination between right and wrong, more frequently admired than imitated. They were both sportsmen by nature and education : Tom threw his heart into the business, Charlie lent it the aid of his head too. He had great powers of observation, quickness of apprehension, and much quiet humour. Had he had enemies, his determination would have been called obstinacy ; and the distinguishing feature of his mind was good common sense. He was rather good looking than handsome, with what is commonly known as a good face ; he had an excellent figure, combining activity with strength ; and notwithstanding his antipathy to school work, was a little older than his years. And yet so little was he understood, that at sixteen he was regarded as the "Dunce of the Family."

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLIE TAKES THE WATER LIKE A DOG.

" Quid jurat errores mersâ jam puppe fateri."

AN event of so great an importance as the death of a father is calculated to make a deep impression : when that death is sudden and mysterious it is doubly so. The death of Geoffrey Thornhill had its due weight with his boys in a different degree. Tom appeared to feel it most acutely at first : but his was a nature prone to receive impressions quickly, and to lose them with equal rapidity. Charlie's grief was more subdued, but more lasting. It had greater real effect upon his character. Such events do not change our nature, they mould and control it. So it was with Charlie. He was in no respect essentially changed from what he had been, but was sobered, steadied, aged : in his case an unnecessary process, as it seemed to us all. Many persons ventured to hint that it would have been well if Tom had benefited in the same way. Such people are not accustomed to analysis, or they would have seen, from the nature of things, that the case was an impossible one.

It is not difficult to conceive circumstances, independently of character, which produced these feelings, and acted thus differently upon each of the boys. The position of both was materially altered. Tom had suddenly become a great man, if not in years, at least in position. Men see themselves as frequently with the eyes of the world as with their own: and after all, for all practical purposes, the view in which the world regards us is the just one. It generally forms a pretty correct estimate of our value. The world chose to regard Tom Thornhill of Thornhills as a very lucky fellow, and measured him by the length of his purse, his genealogical tree, and the extent of his acres, as carefully as Hammond would have measured him for his trousers, or Poole for his coat. And it saved Tom a great deal of trouble to take the same line and plummet for self-adjustment. He saw that certain things were expected of him, and he hoped not to disappoint expectations. Why should he? Let us acknowledge at once that when he did, it was not on the right side.

As the son of Mr. Thornhill of Thornhills, Charlie had been a boy of some consideration among his fellows. He had a large house in which to ring the bells, handsome stabling to show his school-fellows, a keeper at his service, as far as the rabbits were concerned, and a horse that went by the name of Master Charles's mare. In these distinguishing marks of Fortune's favour the world shut its eyes to the real position of our hero. That is, all but a few Belgravian mothers of most astute capabilities, and whose scent is as keen after an elder son, as that of the truest hunter in the kennels of the Quorn or the Pytchley after the hunted fox. Their instinct teaches them the true prince. And now that his father was dead the world was compassionately blind. For Charlie still had the same house, servants, horses, and dogs. He did not ask yet whence they came: and, to do his world justice, it had not as yet forced the inquiry upon him. However, he was wise enough not to wait for its verdict, but to put himself upon his own trial, and stood self-convicted. Outlawry from the good things to which he had been accustomed was a hard sentence to pronounce, and judgment deferred was pleasanter. So he accepted his position for the present, but did not shut his eyes to the future. A less indolent disposition it might have made act: as it was, it only made Charlie think.

"What a quiet fellow you are, Thornhill!" said Teddy Dacre,

a delicate, handsome boy about sixteen years of age, to Charlie, as they leaned over the parapet of the school gardens, a large open court abutting on the street in front of the school chapel and library, a very fine old building of the reign of Edward VI, the founder of the school ; a place in which most of the boys lounged about at odd times, and in which they were now waiting for the twelve o'clock calling over, having just come out of second school. "What a quiet fellow you are, Thornhill ; you never do anything now."

"That's because you do it all for me, Teddy."

"Oh, I don't mean school work : I mean licking the snobs and poaching at Birdington. What lots of rabbits there are there ! Do you know Swan and I were nearly caught by the keepers at Grassfield, setting night-lines."

"Were you ? What do you think Gresham would have done if he'd caught you."

"Oh ! I don't know. He couldn't have flogged us, you know, because he never does flog fifth-form fellows."

"No. And that's one reason why I don't poach at Grassfield and lick the snobs, Teddy. You see, when he could flog us it didn't matter much, because you took your chance ; now it's a shame, because he wouldn't like to expel us for it ; and so we put the old doctor in rather a fix. I think it's a shame."

"What a jolly form that fourth-form was !"

"So it was," said Charlie, with a sigh. "And I almost wish I was back in it. But tell us about the fishing."

"Well, Swan and I were coming back from the big perch hole close by the side of the water, when who should we meet" (Teddy was not so good at his English, you see) "but that big keeper with the black whiskers and the smooth white terrier. He came straight up to us, of course, and asked where we had been. So we told him we'd been to the warren for a walk."

"That was a lie, Teddy."

"So he said. And then he took hold of Swan's rod, and as his pockets were full of night-lines and hooks he was obliged to let it go. Then he told us to go with him to the Hall ; and as we walked along by the side of the brook, when we came to the big hole we—we—we——"

"Bolted, I suppose ?"

"Shoved him in, and then we bolted. We knew he could swim, because he told us so once before, when he found a hole in the bottom of his coracle."

"You'll be found out; for he's got Swan's rod, hasn't he?"

"Yes; but that doesn't signify. It's got no name on it."

"Teddy, 'pon my soul you're incorrigible. I suppose your governor's a magistrate?"

"Of course he is. What of that?"

"Only the next time he commits a vagrant, or a poacher, or any of those fellows, you go and listen to the case. Now I'm going to calling over, and then if you like, we'll go and bathe."

The walk to the bathing-place was beautiful. It was about a mile from the school, along the banks of the river, which were here broken into ledges of sand and ironstone, and interspersed with low bushes, gorse, and firs. The stream flowed with a broad and powerful current; now shallow and rapid, as hurried thought is wont to be; now in a still and quiet corner eddying and turning back again upon itself, as deep meditation: bringing to the surface the lighter matter, but sinking the weightier below. The greater number of the fellows who intended bathing had run on before in company with Nixon the bathing-man, an amphibious, otter-like sort of person, who was engaged to take care of the bathing-places, and give what instruction and help might be wanted in swimming. He was a cunning old dog was Mr. Nixon, and under his ostensible profession of bathing-man he concealed that of dealer in contraband game, spirits, tobacco, and terriers. He always had a few ferrets, and not unfrequently a gamecock or two, belonging to the Pickles of the first class. His wife was the cook, washer-woman, and general store dealer to a certain portion of the school, and dispensed the most extravagant tea, sugar, twopenny loaves, pats of butter, and gooseberry and rhubarb tarts, that can well be conceived. Nixon had been a soldier; and the iniquitous old rascal added much discipline to leaven his laxity of morals. Charlie Thornhill and Edward Dacre set out with the idea of coming up with this worthy and his companions. Before long they had left the precincts of the school behind them, and were following the beaten track by the side of the eddying river.

"What sort of a fellow is your brother Tom, Thornhill?" said Dacre, stopping to strike a light for a cigar.

"Are you going to smoke, Teddy?"

"Yes. I always do. So do you, Thornhill, sometimes, for I've seen you. I do it for my chest," added the boy, laughing as he spoke, and pulling away at a very horrible and highly adulterated cabbage leaf. "So they can't say much if I am caught."

"Of course you do. And I smoke for corns, Teddy. So they can't say much if I'm caught."

"Come, Charlie, that's a good'un," said he, laughing again, and puffing away harder than ever to keep it alight.

"No better than yours, Teddy. And you may be quite sure, when we are caught, nobody will believe a word of either story. Here's the sixth-form bathing-place. What a jolly spot!"

"Let's lie down here, Thornhill. But you've not told me yet about your brother Tom. I've a cousin at Eton, and he says he's the best fellow in the school."

"So he is," said Charlie, who always grew enthusiastic on this topic at least. He had but two at present: one was fox-hunting, and the other his brother Tom. "So he is; he's a splendid fellow, Teddy. He's such a good-looking fellow. And can't he ride? My poor governor's horses were rather too big for him; but he kept two of them, and Sir Frederick Marston says he's to have two more this winter. He's going to Oxford next year. And he's such a good-natured fellow, too. He gave me this watch last holidays, and a new gun: it's as light as a feather, and such a killer!"

"Jocelyn says he's the cleverest fellow in the school, only he never reads," said the other.

"Ah! Tom can do without reading. You should see him do his holiday task; he always does it all in the last three days. He'd astonish old Gresham with his Greek iambics. Lord, how I do hate verses! You haven't any brother?" This was said in a melancholy tone. Charlie had not had time to realize the pleasures of that deprivation.

"No; but I have some sisters. They're stunners, too, I can tell you."

"What do you call them?"

"Why, the eldest is Alice: she's dark, with such jolly hair," rejoined Dacre, who was almost as enthusiastic about them as Charlie was about his brother. "And the other's Edith: she's fifteen. You should just see her ride after my uncle Jocelyn's harriers. She jumped such a place the last time we were out!"

"Why, I didn't know you were a sportsman, Teddy."

"Well, I don't care much about it. It's such a bore. I like lying on the lawn and reading novels best. I think I shall bathe, it's so hot."

"Come on, then."

"Oh, I shall bathe here; the sixth-form fellows don't come

till the afternoon. It's such a nuisance to have to walk any more."

"You'll get a licking if any fellow sees you."

"Nobody will see me ; so here goes." And he commenced preparations by taking off his coat at once.

"That's just like you, Dacre." And thinking that a good thrashing might be useful to all boys of sixteen, even himself, and *à fortiori* to his friend, Charlie Thornhill ceased remonstrance, and laid himself down on the bank to smoke.

Where Charlie's mind had wandered did not seem quite clear ; perhaps he was thinking of his mother, or Tom, or his best friend, Lady Marston. He might have wandered back to the days of the squire, or he might have been wondering what would become of himself when it came to be his turn to scud through the world, as the clouds he was looking at, now brightly and slowly, heavily and loweringly, or fitfully and ever-changing, when he was roused by a sudden cry for help. Dacre could swim, and he looked rapidly round, expecting some trick, when to his surprise he saw nothing. He waited an instant, when the boy's head rose to the surface, near an old oaken stump in the bed of the river. The face was just above the water, and as the limbs below struggled convulsively, the face sank again with a look of such agony and a stifled cry of such terror as left no doubt as to the reality of the situation. Stripping off his coat and waistcoat, he plunged in and swam to the stump. Taking the precaution to seize this with his left arm, he stretched out the right hand in the direction of the body. For a few seconds his efforts were unavailing to raise the head, but at length, by the exertion of all his strength, he succeeded in dragging it to the tree. Here he held it firmly, and ascertained the cause of the poor fellow's submersion by the weight of the weeds which had attached themselves to his legs and feet. He was just calculating upon his capability to get the boy safely to the shore from the tree on which he was lying, when fortunately he heard the voices of Nixon and his companions. "Quick ! Quick !" shouted Charlie Thornhill. "Quick, Nixon ! Help ! help !" And as the sounds reached him they all came running round the bank in time to see Charlie, almost exhausted by the strength of the stream around the tree, the weight of his own clothes, and the apparently lifeless body of poor Teddy Dacre, which he still with difficulty supported. A small round boat made of tarpaulin lay on the river's bank, close at hand. In a moment Nixon was

in it, and steering with one paddle down stream to the tree; but he was scarcely in it before it began to fill, and Nixon, within three feet of the boys, abandoned his coracle and took the water. Once on the old stump, a favourite place from which the sixth-form boys were accustomed to take headers, he was able to relieve Charlie of part of his burden, and in another minute they were safe on shore, with Teddy Dacre between them. Having got rid of the water, and restored animation by the best means in their power, with the assistance of a labourer who was fortunately at home, they got Dacre to a cottage; and after rest and cordials they returned on their way to school.

Of course Dacre and Charlie were absent at dinner: and the cause of it was not long in transpiring.

"Nearly gone, Teddy," said Thornhill, as they walked along.

"Oh! Charlie, Charlie, how can I ever—" and here Teddy burst into tears.

"There, Teddy, old fellow, never mind that; you'd have done the same yourself: it's all over now."

"Except the licking: perhaps they'll let me off, as I was so very nearly drowned."

"I shouldn't, if I was a sixth-form fellow, I can tell you: I'm all for justice: and though I don't think you ought to have been drowned, I am quite sure you ought to be thrashed."

The next day at twelve o'clock a lower-form boy came into the school gardens, and said, "Thornhill, the fellows want you in the sixth-form private room."

"Do they—who told you so?"

"Scott told me to tell you."

"All right," and he went.

When he arrived there was no doubt about the business on hand. Teddy Dacre, looking very foolish, stood at the foot of a long table, round which, in various attitudes, sitting or standing, were several of the sixth-form: "Thornhill," said the head boy, "tell us all about this, for the water has washed it all out of Dacre." Thornhill related the circumstances as succinctly as possible.

"Then he was bathing in our place?"

"Yes."

"Desecrating our Nereus, the protector of our streams and groves: no wonder the divinity seized him by the leg—I wonder he ever let him go."

"He was very nearly drowned," said Charlie, suggestive of a reprieve.

"Thanks to you that he wasn't quite: 'Fiat justitia, ruat cælum,' he must be punished. Who is the prepositor for the day? Humphreys, prepare the block. As to you, Thornhill, you're a good fellow, and the school ought to be as proud of you as if you were senior medallist, or Ireland scholar. Is there anything that we can do for you?"

"Yes, let off Dacre. The only use of punishment is to deter himself and others from the same thing; and he didn't look as if he would ever forget his sensations."

"You'll be an honour to the woollack, if you take to that line. We will let him off, as justice has been avenged. Dacre, respect the rights of your superiors, and write a copy of twenty verses on 'The Advantages of Obedience.'"

Dacre looked relieved and gratefully at Thornhill. As they left the room there was a buzz of applause, and the hum of many voices, amongst which rose one distinctly, which said, "By Jove, that fellow Thornhill's not such a fool as they take him for."

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR HOLIDAY.

"And this beau'eous morn
(The prim'st of all the year) presents me with
A brace of horses."—*Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act III, Scene I.

LOCKE remarks that time is a "consideration of duration, as set out by certain periods, and marked by certain measures or epochs." We have no inclination to call in question this definition. It is rather arbitrary in some cases. The sportsman marks it probably by such days as the 12th of August, the 1st of September, or of November, or by such local associations as the Highlands, Norfolk, Kirby Gate, and the Derby. Servants, I apprehend, by the month; a month's wages or a month's warning. Young Rapid by his Christmas bills; and schoolboys by their holidays—hebdomadal, trimestrial, or semestrial, as the case may be. No man is so fortunate as to forget it altogether. We may cut the acquaintance of the hoary veteran with his scythe for days, months, years, if we always pay ready money, or not at all: but he will not be denied *in toto*. He makes our

acquaintance inevitably, and bows us out at last. Charlie knew nothing about it, excepting on two great occasions—summer and winter vacation. Then he met his brother Tom, rode his own mare, or Tom's horses: shot rabbits with the keeper: went to town to see the pantomimes: enjoyed juvenile county society at the county houses; and was considered presentable at an archery meeting or a picnic; when he dutifully laid the cloth, unharnessed the horses, put down the cushions, boiled the kettle, and made himself generally useful, as boys should do.

As vacation after vacation came and went, Charlie Thornhill increased in stature and popularity, and confirmed the good opinion that had been formed of him. His friendship with Dacre continued uninterrupted from the date of the circumstances detailed in the last chapter. The one seemed never to forget the obligation he was under; the other had forgotten everything connected with it, save the impression of protection, which it appeared to have left upon his mind. Having once saved his life, Charlie considered it an incumbent duty to make it as beneficial to him as possible. Teddy Dacre had left Charlie standing still, in the scholastic race: socially the positions were reversed. It was not his physical strength which was greater, nor talent which was less, than that of Dacre, but it was the force of character and habit. They were just in the same position as when Dacre used to tell Charlie about his sisters, and when Charlie fished Dacre out of the stream.

"A note for Mr. Thornhill," said John, the doctor's own man, as he threw open the door of the hall; "where's Mr. Thornhill?"

"Not here, John, but as you seem rather groggy about the pins, I'll take it for you," replied a very precocious-looking young gentleman as he scrutinised John's crooked legs.

John did not think an encounter of wits worth his time, so retired, gravely placing the note upon the table to take its chance.

"I say, Forester, where's Thornhill?"

"How should I know?"

"Well, you had better find out pretty quickly, and take that note, or you may get a licking. I think I know where it comes from: it's to ask him out for holiday Sunday."

"How do you know that?" said Forester.

"Because I know that old Thoroughgood meant to ask Charlie Thornhill to the steeplechase on Saturday, and I saw his groom

in the school lane. He wants Thornhill to ride one of the ponies: so just be off with the note at once, young fellow, or you'll get a licking. If he's not in Dawson's study, he's at old Mother Shipley's; she keeps his dog." And true enough at old Mother Shipley's was Charlie, regaling himself and Snap on a stewed beefsteak, and anxiously inquiring after some rats, which might have been intended for meat pies, to judge of the tone in which the request was urged. They were really to decide the merits of a rough-coated terrier, and the smooth, highly-bred bull which Charlie was fondling and feeding alternately. The note proved to be from old Squire Thoroughgood to ask Thornhill, with some half-dozen of his schoolfellows, to spend what was called Holiday Sunday at the Cliff, a charming spot about ten miles from the school, and an especial favourite with all the boys. There lived Squire Thoroughgood—an honest, independent, country gentleman of the old school. He had a good estate, a good-looking family of five boys, a clear conscience, and an admirable digestion. He was a man of middle size, about sixty years of age, white-haired and fresh-complexioned, well-built, and active for his age, still an adept at all sports, and encouraging their practice in every man, woman, or child, whom he could convert to his theory. He believed that nothing in the world equalled fox-hunting—that in it was inherent every virtue; above all others, truth and courage. In fact, he scarcely believed in their existence apart from it. So far did he carry his principle, that when compelled to admit that the bishop of the diocese was an honest man and a gentleman, he always asserted that the bishop was a sportsman by disposition and taste, and only prevented by the peculiar circumstances of his case from subscribing largely to the county hounds. All his sons were taught to regard hunting, shooting, and fishing as equivalent to Sir William Curtis's three R's in point of utility, and far beyond them in every other respect. There was always a stable full of horses and ponies, down to the rough Exmoor of the youngest boy, who was now, however, about fifteen, and promoted to a clever, well-bred animal, fourteen hands and a half high, with considerable pretensions as a hunter. Once every year, on a particular holiday Sunday, it was this gentleman's practice to send to Dr. Gresham's for a detachment of schoolboys, whose known propensities had rendered them friends of young Thoroughgoods, or favourites of the squire: and the course of proceeding was in accordance with the old gentleman's notions of what was right,

The holiday Sunday extended from Friday night until Monday morning at 10 A.M., at which time every boy was expected to be again in school. Excuses were unknown; distance was no apology; illness alone constituted anything like a valid reason for absence. Saturday was therefore the day *par excellence*, and Mr. Thoroughgood took care that it should be a pleasant one.'

On the present occasion, as heretofore, the grand climax was a boys' steeplechase. Considering that Mr. Thoroughgood was a country gentleman, and neither a dealer nor a proprietor of a travelling circus, things looked pretty favourable for sport. There were three good hunting galloways in the establishment, which, without being in racing condition, were quite capable of galloping two or three miles over a country, with a proper weight on them; and two more had been sent from a dealer's stable in the neighbourhood, not quite so fit to go, but no bad conveyances for a couple of schoolboys, whose purses and stomachs would be none the lighter if they did come in half a field behind the rest. Besides, there was always the chance of a tumble; and each, confident in his own skill, as long as his pony was certain to jump, would have taken any sort of odds that came within the bounds of possibility. On Friday afternoon, accordingly, Mr. Thoroughgood's phaeton, licensed on great occasions to carry six little men, the groom, and five schoolboys, conveyed a tolerably noisy party from the school-gates to the Cliff, where the hospitable squire, with a son or two on either side, was waiting to welcome his juvenile guests.

"Now, boys, be off to your rooms: dinner, sharp, in half an hour;" and out came boys and carpet bags with an equal celerity.

"Mind that bag," said Dacre, "there's a pot of patent blacking for my black boots."

"Now then, stupid," said Wilkinson to another, "don't sit upon that—you'll crush my tops:" whilst Charlie Thornhill, quite awake to the emergency, collared his own property, and was soon mounting towards his bedroom, leaving his comrades to follow, which they soon did. Everyone had a cutting whip, and two out of the five had to open their bags with a penknife, having left their keys behind.

Dinner passed off as such dinners must. It was evidently a bye-day. There was plenty to eat and drink, and a bottle or two of champagne enlivened the conversation of the youngsters; but it was manifest that the serious business of the meeting was deferred, in every respect, till the morrow. One thing Charlie

heard, and which somehow gave him a new interest in the proceedings: the Misses Dacre were staying in the neighbourhood, and his curiosity would be gratified, as they were to be of the squire's party for the day. The surprise did not seem to affect Teddy Dacre to an equal extent, who had some misgivings on the score of his horsemanship, and did not appreciate feminine badinage, of which he was pretty certain to fall in for his share. A very jovial game at whist, in which each told his partner pretty plainly the state of his hand before playing, and in which there was none of the villainous retrospection of the game so common amongst amateurs, but in the present case quite beyond the limited powers of the party, closed the evening; and Wilkinson, retiring early to look at his breeches, which had been fabricated from a pair of white moleskin trousers for the occasion, and Teddy Dacre to polish his boots with the very best patent French varnish, which could not be trusted to any hands but his own, the party broke up and retired to rest.

Mornings always shine brightly upon schoolboys when there's no particular reason for the contrary. To-day nobody could have seen a cloud. It was early spring; and March was for the present enacting the lamb. Every one of the five had been out of bed before daybreak to see what sort of a day it was likely to be; and each had returned to bed fully persuaded that it was sure to rain, until the light gray morning eased their minds of that anxiety.

"Come in," said Thornhill, as a knock came to the door. "What in the world do you want, Teddy?" and the misty outline of Master Edward Dacre, in a white shirt with black arms, made its appearance in Thornhill's room. "It can't be time to get up yet."

"Well, I don't think it is, quite," said the other, as he nervously twitched up a pair of drawers, and sat down at the foot of the bed. "Do you know these colours of mine are uncommonly cold? I don't think shirt sleeves are quite the thing for the middle of March."

"But you'll soon be warm enough if you should happen not to get into the brook, which George Thoroughgood says is quite full of water: the governor's delighted, because he says there's no danger of broken backs. If you are not hot enough, put a couple of Jerseys underneath. But why didn't you borrow some colours? you could easily have got them. I had some sent to

me from Turner, Sir Frederick Marston's trainer, as soon as I got scent of the thing."

"How does it look, Charlie; not very bad, does it?"

"Bad! not at all. You're quite a swell compared to Russell. He's sewed two scarlet sleeves on to a black cloth waistcoat. It has a very sporting look before, not quite up to the mark behind."

"I wish to goodness I could get off riding, Charlie." Here Charlie sat bolt upright in bed in thorough bewilderment. "My sister Edith does chaff so, you can't think. I wonder whether George Thoroughgood would let me off, and ride for me?"

"Bless your innocent heart, my dear boy; he can't ride the weight by two stone. Besides, what would the Squire say? It isn't honest, Teddy; 'pon my word it isn't."

"I don't see that."

"Why, you came here, and ate your dinner, and brought your traps, and you've made your shirt into a sort of Prussian sentry-box, and you're going to breakfast; and of course all that's the same thing as entering for it. It's deceiving the Squire. You are such a shifty bird, Teddy; and all because you're afraid of a woman." And here the speaker curled himself up again, and gave a grunt indicative of fatigue.

"Yes; and so would you be afraid if you knew her."

"I don't know about that," said Charlie, with some few misgivings on the subject; "but I know this, she wouldn't put me off from such a jolly lark as we're going to have to-day. Why, there are two-and-thirty fences, lots of timber, a double post and rails, and the brook, as I told you before, quite full of water. Only just fancy!" And it was a lovely picture certainly; but Teddy Dacre did not seem to take so cheerful a view of it in his shirt and drawers, as Charlie Thornhill from underneath the bed-clothes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STEEPLE-CHASE.

“Teach the youth tales of fight, and grace
His earliest feat of field or chase.”

Lady of the Lake, c. vi, ll.

“HERE they come at last,” said old Thoroughgood, pretty nearly tired of waiting for his breakfast, as the clock struck a quarter past nine, one full quarter of an hour beyond his usual time. The old gentleman might have been justifiably vexed at the delay, and with any other person would have been so; but a schoolboy was to him what a tortoiseshell cat is to Aunt Tabitha—it breaks nothing, it steals nothing, it inconveniences no one, it can do no wrong.

“I beg you a thousand pardons, sir,” said our hero, walking shyly into the breakfast room; “I really was so tired.” And here we may remark that the pleasure of lying in bed constitutes one of the supreme blessings of a schoolboy’s holiday. He has no idea, while at school, of any pleasures which necessitate the ordinary rules of rising. Ten minutes may do, a quarter of an hour may do, but half an hour is better to break the delusion of the chapel bell. On the morning in question it is but fair to lay no such dereliction to their charge. They were all of them up, all of them had performed their ablutions in good time; but the encasing themselves in their new and heterogeneous costumes was a service of considerable uncertainty, and involved, in most cases, some ingenious contrivances. Large trousers had to be drawn into tight breeches; narrow boots had to encircle wide-spreading pantaloons. The long had to be made short and the short long. There were as many button-hooks at one time as there were buttons. The assistance of the valet was *selon les règles*; but, we can scarcely recount the fact without blushing, that, from the old housekeeper down to the very youngest, the kitchen-maid, every one of them had a finger in the pie. Refractory tops came up too high, and spread themselves widely, “but not too well,” about the calves that should have been, or perchance now are. Equally obstinate breeches refused the meeting. Each seemed to have stepped into another’s shoes, whether they fitted or not; and the fitness of things depended, for the first time,

upon the length of an elder brother. Before long, however, they had all followed Charlie Thornhill, and were passed in review before Squire Thoroughgood and his sons, whose curiosity had been roused to see whether the devices for steeple-chasing costume were more or less ingenious than those of previous years. They proved to be nearly upon a par with those of their predecessors. Charlie, indeed, by the addition of an extra pair of woollen stockings, made an appearance not unworthy of his sporting reputation; and the harlequin jacket he had borrowed, with its black cap, though a little tight across the shoulders, pre-eminently qualified him for taking the lead. Wilkinson came next in order and in weight, and, as far as his purple-and-orange jacket was concerned, presented a very tolerable figure; but having hired his tops of the postboy at the "Dragon of Wantley," at a moment's notice, his legs had a melodramatic appearance between Charles II and a French Jacobin. Dacre's shirt was declared to be an admirable substitute for the white-and-black family colours, which it was intended to represent: and with his Wellington boots, which had been varnished to a turn from bottom to top, and coaxed to meet a rather shrunken pair of leathers, the only ones in the party, gave him a not unflattering resemblance to a magpie. Billy Russell, or the "Honourable William," as he was called, made the most of a rather limited wardrobe: he had the black cloth waistcoat and scarlet sleeves already noticed, and had deliberately thrust into a pair of top boots of antiquated form his white-cord trousers, on to which a pretty housemaid, bribed by half-a-crown and a kiss, had been employed for half an hour in sewing mother-of-pearl buttons, to give an appearance of reality, which was only available at long distances. Whilst the light-weight of the party, little Tommy Bosville, in the most correct of breeches and boots, with his black jacket and cap, was hailed by universal acclamation as the swell. Very neat, indeed, he looked; and if Tommy's pluck had only equalled his elegance, there can be no mistake as to who would have been the winner on that day. He was the only one of the lot who felt that he was *quite* the thing, and he commenced breakfast with a corresponding appetite. Very few men eat well who have a suspicion of their toilet, especially on a hunting morning. Boys are less susceptible of these *desagrémens*. But their attention was not a little diverted from the hung beef, hot rolls, devilled kidneys, and split fowl, by the singularity of their costume.

"Now, young gentlemen, time's up," said the Squire, trotting into the billiard room, in woollen cord breeches and top boots, with his neat broad-skirted black coat and white neckcloth, looking the picture of an old-fashioned sportsman. "Let us be off to the stable-yard: I suppose you know your mounts. Thornhill is to have the little bay horse Solomon; he's a capital fencer, and able to carry a little more weight. Then Wilkinson had better ride the gray pony Kitty; that's a good mount."

"She ought to win, sir," said Captain Thoroughgood, who lounged into the yard with one of his brothers, smoking a cigar. The captain was a great man amongst the boys, as all cavalry officers were before the universal adoption of a moustache and beard destroyed the most attractive distinction of the service. "Who's going to ride Judy?"

"I, sir," said Russell, as he looked with an undaunted air at the labours of the pretty housemaid, and wondered whether the yokels would be taken in by the imitation. "I, sir. She'll go into water, won't she?"

"Into it? Not she, if you ride her at it. Who told you that?"

"Thornhill said she didn't look as if she liked water any more than I did."

"Oh! never mind him, he's only been chaffing you; he wants to win himself, and he thinks that will funk you. You ride her straight; she can jump better than anything here, except Solomon, and he's not so fast as the mare. But come, get up; here's Dacre on the chestnut pony, shirt-sleeves and all," added he, as that worthy emerged from a stable door, ready mounted, followed by the swell, leading a clever little roan mare that had been sent up from the dealer's to participate in the day's sport.

At the head of the cavalcade, and surrounded by neighbouring farmers and tenants, with his own sons and guests, rode the cheerful little squire. Happiness glowed in every feature, not only at the pleasure he was giving to others, but in anticipation of the fun he was preparing for himself, for the giving a pleasure is no diminution of one's own; and he almost broke out into a laugh. The gentleman riders, each on his own crack, followed in due order, and the whole was closed by such an assemblage of stablemen, helpers, and privileged labourers and servants, under the conduct of Mr. Gates, the stud-groom, as would have gladdened the eyes of a border knight on the advent

of a speculative foray. Half an hour's gentle riding brought them all to a farm of Mr. Thoroughgood's, where about two miles and a half of a steeple-chase course had been marked out by flags, so as to render the line as unmistakable as could be. The honest historian is bound to record the fact, that a certain compromise had been entered into with the fences themselves, so as to put them all within reasonable chance of negotiation, and in accordance with the presumed inexperience of the performers.

The squire loved to see a tumble or two, and thought falling gracefully one of the first accomplishments of a good horseman ; but he had no idea of having the sunset of his life clouded, or his pillow haunted by the ghost of a young gentleman of sixteen or seventeen years of age, with his trousers inserted into his Wellington boots, and a bloodstained waistcoat with parti-coloured sleeves of a size to match. So the stiff timber was taken out, and the strongest blackthorns were laid a little low ; and though the water was left wide enough for any juvenile glutton, it was carefully selected with a sound bottom, and not more than four feet in depth, so that the ducking might be complete without the necessity for the drags of the Humane Society. Another hour was spent in looking over the course and other preliminaries, including that downright idleness which is always the concomitant of immense official bustle, and eminently indicative of amateur racing. By this time the course and the starting-post presented a tolerably lively scene, notwithstanding the privacy of the proceedings ; and half a dozen county carriages, with a few flies, a mail phaeton, and several gentlemen on horseback, served to stimulate the nerves of the competitors, if a clear conscience and a schoolboy's stomach ever require such stimulant at all. Having taken off their great coats, and performed their preliminary canter, without which no truly sporting effect can be produced, even Teddy Dacre forgot the thinness of his shirt-sleeves, and Master Bosville the size of the brook so eloquently described by Charlie Thornhill. We are obliged to admit that enthusiasm carried that young gentleman a little beyond strict bounds, for so truthful a person, though we think he deceived himself quite as much as other people. Bosville, indeed, confident in the correctness of his get-up, and Billy Russell, regardless of the deficiencies of his own, took a nearer view of the bright eyes that were to recompense their exertions later in the day. But

Charlie, naturally shy, and tossed between curiosity to see one face and an innate consciousness of absurdity mixed with the proceedings, kept aloof from the crowd of carriages till an awful knell, in the sound of a bell for preparation, smote upon his ear.

"Now, gentlemen, take your places, if you please," said the jolly squire; "the captain's gone to the winning-post with Gates; here are three volunteers going as umpires, and there's Joey Sanders, the keeper, down at the brook, with a gaff to help out those that require his assistance. Never mind your breeches, Russell; they'll fit capitally before long, I know: they only want damping. Now, are you ready? When I drop the flag, and say 'Go!' you must go: and the devil take the hindmost; 'Occupet extremum scabies.' You see I haven't forgotten my Greek, you young rascals. Go!" And away they went, Billy Russell on Judy, with a lead a little stronger than he liked.

Whenever I find it desirable to write a run, it shall not be two miles and a half, and the performers shall not be school-boys. I have a fancy for rivalling Nimrod, or at least for approaching that standard of excellence. Neither shall I draw upon imagination for incidents. There is more of the marvellous in reality than in much fiction: and why not in the hunting-field as in the world? Like passions are at work; like faults and like excellences have their natural results. Even a big fence in getting away is like adversity in early life, it strengthens where it does not kill. What are the successful efforts composed of?—patience, courage, judgment. What comes to early grief, and puts us *hors de combat* at once, or leaves us vainly struggling behind?—unsubstantial confidence, rashness, or equally unsubstantial fear. What carries us half through the run, and then leaves us sticking, after a successful start, in miserable failure?—too much pace, the loose reins of self-indulgence, wrong turns, and losing sight of our object; or some beast of a rival, with a little more running in him, jumps on the top of us at the earliest opportunity, and extinguishes our hopes and our breath together.

But while I write thus, we lose time. Already three or four fences have been safely negotiated without a fall. The harlequin jacket is not very forward, having been a little outpaced by the resolute Judy, who, by great good fortune, had the sturdy little Billy Russell on her back. Beyond an irresistible jerk at

the first fence, which pulled him on to the shoulders, and made his nose bleed, he was going pretty smoothly still to the fore. Teddy Dacre, too, was after him on the chestnut, and the swell—ignominious position!—brought up the rear. Wilkinson and Charlie were close together, playing at real jockeys remarkably well. Of course this amicable state of affairs was not likely to last, and a few fences further on, little Bosville spoilt the elegance of his costume by tumbling over the roan pony's head at a post and rail: whilst the Honourable Russell still led, sitting a little nearer the horns than usual. At the next fence Judy ducked her head, landing Billy on his back in the ditch, whilst she jumped over him, and resumed the running on her own account. "Now then, Russell, you get out of the way, blocking up the gaps," said Teddy Dacre, who came next, and was really beginning to feel at home. "You be hanged," said Master Russell, who was now up and standing in the fence, ready for an argument, "there's lots of room for you, only you're in a funk." The dispute was ended by Charlie making a fresh hole. In the meantime the ponies were caught straightway by the numerous touts and hangers-on, and restored to their owners, who were soon up and after their comrades. The cheerful little sallies which took place during the ride, especially at the fences, where little casualties happened, were quite refreshing, and robbed the rivalry of all sting. "Go it, Magpie," said one; "don't chirp too soon," as Teddy Dacre cut a genteel summersault over a blackthorn. "Now then, Boots—well done!" said another, as Wilkinson landed side by side with Charlie in a muddy ditch, out of which, however, they managed to scramble without any inconvenience beyond the necessity of remounting; and giving occasion to the other three to make up for lost time, which they did somewhat at the expense of their ponies. And now comes the water. Two-thirds of the course had been accomplished; and it was not till they had turned to come home that this formidable obstacle presented itself. Teddy Dacre was the only one of the party that had any experience in drowning, and he had no fancy for a repetition. Charlie fully believed in a ducking, but never despaired of anything. Rather negative feelings actuated Wilkinson, and little Bosville shut his eyes mentally and physically to the danger. As to Billy Russell, he had not long become a voluntary agent, and scarcely realized the situation, but he made no doubt about getting over, if he could but sit on. They all charged it, however, manfully;

Charlie got over with a fall, Solomon over-jumped himself; the gray refused, and blundered in and out again upon a second effort. Teddy Dacre turned on all his steam, and, though pretty nearly off the shop board, went on with the lead. Judy, a little blown from previous exertions, landed Billy well into the water, who, as he was crawling out, was pulled back again a little unexpectedly by Tommy Bosville. The swell, when he saw the water, lost his nerve; and the roan mare, shooting suddenly round in the wake of Russell, alarmed at the melancholy failure of that hero, sent her rider flying over her shoulders right into the middle of the stream. He was but small; and not coming immediately to the bottom, he thought self-preservation, the first law of nature, should be obeyed. He saw no tails to a coat, but he saw a boot to a leg, and seized it. Had it been but Wilkinson, the boot would have come off: the Honourable William's refused to give way, and they both fell back comfortably into the brook to find their own level. We need hardly say that when they found themselves safe within their depth, they felt strongly inclined to quarrel then and there; and had it not been for the momentary absence of Russell, who had dived to the bottom in search of his whip, it would probably have ended in a fight on the spot. Luckily, the attention of both was called to the business in hand by Joey Sanders, who threatened to commence operations with his gaff, unless the young gents came out of the water, instead of standing there "a disturbin' of the fish." His remonstrances, and the mighty weapon he wielded, had the desired effect; but the length of their controversy had put them out of the race. Dacre continued to lead; and the Magpie on the chestnut pony was becoming a strong favourite with the multitude. He had the foot of Solomon; but being a little nearer to dealers' condition, and not in such constant work as the Thoroughgood stable, there was still the ghost of a chance for Charlie. One more fence, and the run in: and with a laudable zeal for the ladies who had transferred themselves to the winning post by a short cut through a couple of gates from the start, the squire had taken care that it should be a jump. Already Alice and Edith Dacre looked upon their brother as the victor. Already Teddy Dacre felt himself secure of the prize. Already Wilkinson had declined, and Charlie began to think further perseverance useless, when the chestnut pony, which had hitherto been going well, declined the last fence, and Solomon, pricking his

ears, and answering to a somewhat emphatic kick from Charlie, cleared the hurdles and furze-bushes, and landed the "Dunce of the Family" a winner by some lengths. The gray mare Kitty, was a tolerable second; and after considerable persuasion the chestnut hung his hind legs in such an ignominious manner that Teddy was compelled to dismount before he could be released. At an interval of a minute or two the missing competitors, Russell and Bosville, trotted up the course, still discussing in somewhat animated language by whose fault it was that they were both of them wet through.

CHAPTER XV.

A DINNER AND ITS AGRÉMENTS.

"separat hoc nos
 ——— a grege brutorum."—JUV. XV.

THERE is no idea in the range of social life so beautiful as that of sisterhood. A single girl may remind us in her severity, if she be severe, of a Greek drama; if she be gentle, of a weeping willow. But two sisters are never too dignified for every-day life, never too pliant. There is a golden cord of mutual obligation which unites them. They borrow and pay back one another's beauties; and the reflection of a sister's excellences make those of each more attractive. That is why old Lady Trumpcard never knows which it is that young Scraptoft means to marry. How should she? He never knows himself. I do not know that this peculiarity extends beyond two. I rather think not. But unless two suitors present themselves about the same time, and each claims his victim at once, it is very likely to be a long game at haphazard: and even then they have been known to change by almost mutual consent.

When Charlie Thornhill sat down to dinner at old Mr. Thoroughgood's, he saw around him a heterogeneous mass of excellent people; fast young women with palsied mothers, and slow young women with dashing chaperones; unpolished country squires, boorish in appearance; *empresés* in manner, with red hands and large feet—the former of which they were continually

polishing with their pocket-handkerchiefs, whilst the latter reposed in uncomfortable inelegance beneath their chairs. It was just as impossible to overlook Dacre's sisters, in such an assembly, as to have overlooked the moon amongst the planets. They gave light where there would have been nothing but eating and drinking. Charlie Thornhill was a shy boy, naturally; he felt himself rather the hero of the day, which made him more shy: he was very susceptible, too, which shy persons not unfrequently are: and he was of that age when the other sex have a vast superiority over ours. He found himself next to the one sister, and nearly opposite to the other. From some peculiar cause, assignable to mesmerism or satanic influence, as I suppose Mr. Close of Cheltenham would say, he was preterminately attracted towards Edith Dacre. Charlie's indolent mind did not inquire the wherefore. "Blue-eyed and full of chaff" was the limited description he had had of her. Alice was a "stunner," said the same animated *raconteur* of family portraiture; yet when he looked at the black-eyed girl beside him, he involuntarily thought of his brother Tom: Tom, who at that moment was calling mains over a bottle of claret in Lord Carlingford's rooms in Peckwater.

It is just possible that the short description of these girls, by their brother Teddy, does not convey much notion of them to the reader. Attend, then, whilst I somewhat amplify it. But not too much. Let facts attest their characters.

The soup being gone, Charlie Thornhill took courage to turn round to his left-hand neighbour, as less formidable than the turban and diamonds on his right. The first thing that struck him was the extraordinary smoothness and brilliancy of the coal-black hair. It gave him a mysterious notion of condition. Then he got to eyes of the same colour, but softened in hue, as though some violet mingled with the black. The other features had no particular expression nor beauty, beyond the mouth, which was somewhat large, but well-formed and humorous, not laughing, but capable of being made to laugh. The figure, which was not at present apparent, was well-formed and large, but carried off by a corresponding presence and height. Charlie felt a little afraid, and much attracted. He knew Alice Dacre to be but a year beyond his own age: but she carried full three summers more in a simple but perfectly assured manner. Yet Alice was a little shy with strangers: perhaps proud. Towards the pre-server of her brother's life she felt no pride, and towards school-

boys of seventeen but very little shyness. The great force of her character was in its truth, and even the "Dunce of the Family" felt it at once.

Then he turned his eyes opposite, and through the spring flowers of an *épergne* he saw his fate. Laughing eyes, soft brown hair, a beautifully-formed nose and mouth, every movement of which was a smile, and displayed the even, dazzling little teeth within: a complexion almost delicate; but a matchless grace of budding womanhood which set disease at defiance. There was no deficiency of character in the features or form, soft and womanlike as they were. Alice Dacre could be dreamt of as alone, or as giving support were it was wanted; but first impressions of Edith Dacre attached her irresistibly to her sister, or detached her from her home only to entwine her nature with a stronger and more virile stem, that was her only weakness. Boy as he was, he saw nothing to fear, but something to love; and he thought the "chaff" of which Teddy had apprised him would be the most palatable food on which he could fatten.

"Malo Venusinam, quam te, Cornelia, mater
Gracchorum."

A word on the Dacres themselves. Mr. Dacre was a man of high family, great pretension, and but moderate means; and had married a lady whose object in life was to appear in the world as a member of the *beau monde*, of whose usances she was supposed to be perfectly cognisant. They went to the proper places at the proper seasons, were seen at the proper houses, and were unobtrusive negatives in the world of fashion. He was tall, handsome, well-mannered, and slightly bald. She was stout, dignified, an excellent talker, and richly but darkly dressed. They were both a little above the average in point of brains: but made friends, and preserved them, by a judicious control of their intellects. They had both objects in life. His was to obtain an attachéship for his son; hers to obtain eligible *partis* for her daughters. Alice was out. Edith was still in the schoolroom, if the embroidery of flowers, lessons in water-colours, and tea with Miss Wilkinson, whenever there was company at dinner, could be construed into that locality. They were pronounced by everybody to be a charming family: they were kind to the poor, condescending to their inferiors, tolerably civil to their equals, *obeissant* to their superiors, and distantly recognisant of the curate of the parish in which they lived. It would have been

difficult to reconcile the visit of the girls to Mr. Thoroughgood's neighbourhood and table with Mrs. Dacre's doctrines, but for one fact. They were under the charge of a lady whom it was not desirable to offend. Lady Elizabeth Montagu Mastodon was a great woman, in every sense of the word, and a relative of Mr. Dacre. Montagu Mastodon was member for the county, enormously wealthy, and had no children. Lady Elizabeth was the daughter of an Irish peer, whose estates had been sold under the Act for 300,000*l.*, every shilling of which was long since squandered. She was the stoutest, the vulgarest, the cleverest, and the kindest woman that ever walked, we might say rolled, upon two legs: and if Mr. Montagu Mastodon, with his iron and coal, found the money, she found the popularity for the county member. She went everywhere, did everything, and knew everybody; and hence the appearance of the Misses Dacre at the hospitable board of our old friend Thoroughgood.

"Lor' bless me, Mr. Thoroughgood," said the old lady in her own right, who had become more practical and more vulgar since her marriage, "I wonder you don't kill yourselves with your steeple-chasing. So that's the young gentleman that won to-day? It does you great credit, sir; whatever is done at all ought to be well done. Thornhill, Thornhill—ah! that's his name," said she, putting up her glass, "is it? His brother's at Christ Church with my scapegrace of a nephew, Carlingford. Do you know what the prize poem is this year?"

"I did hear, but I forget," said Charlie, blushing up to the eyes—"something about the niggers," added he, after a moment's pause.

"What! the Africans, the slaves? Surely they don't call them niggers in a subject for the Newdigate?"

"I think it's the nigger: I know it's about Africa, because my brother wrote to me about it."

"Bless my heart, so it is about Africa; now I recollect: it's the Niger: all about Africa, only not quite in the way you mean, Mr. Thornhill. Bless the boy! what a capital joke."

"Mr. Thornhill," said Alice Dacre, "I am so glad to have had an opportunity of thanking you for your kindness to my brother. Papa and mamma often talk about you. We can never forget it; and they would be so glad if you could come to see us when the holidays begin. We can try and make you comfortable, though I dare say you love Thornhills: only we want to thank you. Do come!"

Charlie began a speech. To his infinite relief, Lady Elizabeth looked at the old maiden cousin who had sat at the top of Mr. Thoroughgood's table since the death of his wife, pushed back her chair, and made preparations for rolling into the drawing-room. Alice rose too ; and as she held out her hand, saying, "I think the carriage must be ordered before you leave the dining-room," Charlie almost thought he could have tossed up which of the two it should be.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNCLE HENRY.

"Lerne früh die Kunst Geld zu verdienen."

TIME is the steadiest traveller of my acquaintance. He stands still for nobody, and with nobody : and though he always accompanies us, he still goes before, and follows on our heels. Nothing daunts him, nothing turns him aside ; and he alone takes for his companion the young, the old, the fast, and the slow, and keeps up with them all. In his presence we learn the inutility of prodigality of efforts. He never hurries, therefore he is always going. His condition is unexceptionable, and he leaves us with a low bow only on the confines of eternity. Men are too apt to ride, walk, eat, drink, fight, and legislate too fast : their efforts are too prodigious ; their strength fails ; and the quicker they go the sooner they are caught. Not so the prudent man, who learns a lesson from his fellow-traveller. He despises the vanity of doing this, that, or the other, for the sake of being talked about, for the happiness of creating a nine days' wonder, and making himself uncomfortable for the sake of gratifying the admiration of the vulgar. The same motive which makes one man venture his neck over four feet and half of stiff timber on a beaten horse, makes another swallow two bottles of claret after a sufficient dinner, or eat fifteen eggs for breakfast. This man exhibits his vanity in driving a steam-engine, in Haymarket revelries, and in marriage with a woman of easy virtue. That man in a fight of an hour and ten minutes with a pugilistic butcher, in riding four-and-twenty horses two hundred miles in eight hours and a half, or in being picked out of a wager-boat

half dead after a triumphant struggle with a professional bargee. I do not mean to put the consequences of each upon a par ; but the motive which induces this prodigality of exertion is usually the same in all. The wise man eschews excitement. He enjoys his pleasures as he eats his dinner. He enters upon life as upon a journey, which may be long and troublesome, and may require plenty of husbanding of strength for a successful issue. He waits upon his competitors in the race : he looks, like Time, a bit of a laggard, as if he were being left behind. But they begin to come back, and he perseveres with his steady pace, and wins with some pounds in hand.

“ Wisely and slow : they stumble that run fast.”

There's no mirror so honest as your contemporary's face. I look in the glass, and believe myself to be my own junior by about a couple of lustres. I look at my boots and breeches ; they are essentially the same that I have worn these twenty years. They look so, and I firmly believe them. I walk as far and as fast through the stubbles of my friends, I ride the same class of horse, with——no, let me be honest, not with quite the same nerve ; but I am still far removed from a “funker.” I can even drink port wine in a land where no port is, but a vile compound of black grapes, logwood, and molasses, without a bilious headache, or the want of an extra cup of tea. All this assures me I am young. I look in the glass, as I said before ; I see no gray hairs on my head nor in my whiskers—thank Heaven ! I do not wear a beard : nor do I remark the slightest, not even the most respectable tendency to corpulency. This is as it should be. I am still young in my own estimation, and only 11st. 7lb.—a perfect godsend to an establishment the proprietor of which is a 13st. man, and always mounted just up to his weight. But when I go out to dinner, I go in fear and trembling, lest the truth should be brought home to me. “Smith,” says our host, “you remember Jones of St. Dirtiface ; you were the same year.” I look up, and I see a huge mass of hair, which seems as if it had been gathered on the top of Mont Blanc. Jones's eyes, once rather large and prominent, have sunk, abashed at their former iniquities, into their sockets, his neckcloth is voluminous, his voice going down hill, and his awful waistcoat displays dimensions which I remember formerly as belonging only to sexagenarians. And this man was at the

university with me ? Do I look anything like that ? Of course not. But there are twenty ways of growing old, and it is quite clear that, to know one's self, one should keep up an acquaintance with one's contemporaries.

And all these monstrous buckram men in armour have grown out of one poor truth—that Time had not stood still with Charlie Thornhill.

The London season had already begun. Tom Thornhill had just taken his degree, and paid ten thousand pounds to the great fœnerator of the day, a most respectable firm at the West End, and one which might have papered its offices with post obits. He was in town, and in great force, surrounded by bloodsuckers and lickspittles, preserving, however, the valuable reputation of being neither a fool nor a blackguard for the present. He was saved, just yet, from utter reprobation by the appearance in public of his friend Lord Carlingford, one of the richest noblemen in England, and who offered so brilliant a bait, and so safe a one, that Tom Thornhill was only to be regarded as a *pis aller*. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston were at their own house, as usual, in Grosvenor Square, he for his parliamentary duties, she for her amusement : and in their train came Charlie Thornhill, who always found a ready welcome with his father's oldest friends.

Lady Marston, a great reader, was in the library. Charlie was gone for a ride. Sir Frederick came into the room, and seated himself not far from his wife, with the paper in his hand.

"Have you seen the paper this morning, Kate ?"

"No ; not to-day. Who is to be the new Bishop of—— ? I do hope we shall have learning or character."

"If you mean, by learning, a critical knowledge of the Greek article, and capability for editing a Greek play, I think we could do without the first : and I do not think any of the reverend bench can be said to fail in the latter."

"Humph !" said Lady Marston. "Cæsar's wife should be without suspicion ; and that's more than can be said for all your venerable diocesans. As to the learning, classical knowledge is better than none ; and it was an evidence of great capability, you must acknowledge, my dear Frederick. I own I liked your Monks and your Butlers, and I do not think you have bettered them. But what was your news ?"

"That miserable blockhead Feltham has married an outra-

geous woman with half a dozen aliases, after settling more than half his income upon her, and placing it at her own disposal ; and old General Feltham, his uncle, with the rest of his family, has a commission of lunacy sitting to inquire whether he is capable of taking care of himself and the Feltham estates, to which the old general and his family are the heirs presumptive."

"But he is not mad any more than you are. He is vicious and foolish, but perfectly responsible for his actions, and consequently for the use of his property."

"It's a very bad case, however, Kate ; and though legally capable, he is morally incapable of directing himself or his affairs. He'll be a beggar before another five years is over his head."

"Very probably, if the lawyers leave him anything to spend. But the family ought to have found that out before he disgraced himself and them by such a marriage. And if he spends everything now, the general will have the less to regret the loss of. Are you very busy ?"

"No, Kate. What is it ?"

"Charlie Thornhill."

"Ah ! that troubles me, my wife. What's to be done ?"

"Tell him the truth, the whole truth."

"The whole truth is not mine to tell. Besides, it's not a certainty, and may come all right again. The Irish property bought of Kildonald is now represented by the four thousand pounds which has been returned, the sale never having been completed. And although I cannot but suspect some rascality, the money certainly did not go through his banker nor his man of business."

"His banker was his brother, and he would not perhaps wish him to know ; but I am satisfied the sale was completed."

"The matter was arranged by a Mr. Burke, a lawyer in Cork, who acted for both parties. Poor Geoffrey was not only so little a man of business, but so culpably negligent in all matters connected with money, excepting the paying of his debts of honour, that neither I nor his brother can make anything of it."

"And from what you tell me, I am to conclude that there is but little probability of Charlie ever having more than this pittance until his mother's death. However, he is not an absolute pauper, and he must have a profession." Here Lady Marston subsided into a fit of quiet thoughtfulness ; it had a tinge of melancholy in it, as thoughtfulness for other people

ought to have : destiny is a sad subject of contemplation at the best of times. At last she raised her head with a more cheerful look, and said, "Can I go to Pall Mall in the carriage to-day Frederick?"

"Certainly, my dear. Why should you ask?"

"Because I wish to see Henry Thornhill ; and as it is on Charlie's account, I want to know whether you disapprove."

"By no means ; but I fear you can do but little to mend matters."

"We shall see ; and if the worst comes to the worst, Charlie must make a fortune. After all, it is the more honourable course of the two."

It was a fine sunshiny afternoon when Lady Marston turned into Piccadilly out of Berkeley Square on her way to Pall Mall. Her equipage was faultless, her bonnet was charming, and she ought to have been the happiest woman in London. Indeed she was very nearly so, for she had a well-balanced mind, which shook off light sorrows like "dewdrops from the lion's mane," as long as they only affected herself. She was unfortunate in having a heart which the highest cultivation in that respect, had always kept alive to other people's requirements. When this is the case in the world of fashion (and there's quite as much feeling there as amongst the virtuous middle classes,) there is usually plenty of exercise to keep the hand in. Her present object was a visit to Henry Thornhill, to see what could be done for the future advantage of the unconscious Charlie. That amiable youth at that very moment was making some scientific examination of a rather high-priced hunter, with a view to a first season on his own account, and wondering how far judicious summering would bring round a rather questionable leg. St. James's Street was alive with dandies. Old General Bosville bowed, after the fashion of Carlton House, from the steps of his club. What wonderful preservation ! thought Lady Marston. Then she stopped for a moment to speak to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who thought they must go out if Sir John Plumper pressed his motion. The lady was not below politics nor above point-lace. A very comprehensive mind was Lady Marston's. At the bottom of the street she caught sight of Carlingford and Tom Thornhill, with two or three more of their set, staring at Mr. Dighton's middle-aged dandies in Sam's window. She looked into the future, and the sibyl sighed, for she saw a long array of

lost talent, misspent time, and a "sowing to the whirlwind," and she thought of Geoffrey Thornhill as she first knew him—not so young as that, but very like it. Within half a minute the barouche drew up at the dingy banking-house of Hammer-ton and Thornhill.

Lady Marston's was a carriage. Not a brougham, with an active coachman accustomed to drive a pair of horses, and weighing only 10st. 6lb., and a cockaded flunkey in a demi-livery. Hers was a carriage, with a fine, round, dignified coachman, well-powdered and silk-stockinged, who had never been asked to drive east of Temple Bar on the one side, or west of Kensington Gore on the other, and her footman was six feet two, and carried a stick with the air of a drum-major. The sensation created at the Guards' Club was not slight, and the young gentlemen at the Oxford and Cambridge were nearly frantic with curiosity. In the meantime Henry Thornhill had himself appeared to her summons, and leisurely handed the sweetest woman in London into the very dingiest of back parlours.

Lady Marston had sufficient tact to know that time was more valuable to the banker than to her, and she was scarcely comfortably ensconced in a leather-cased chair before she proceeded to business.

"Have you seen your nephew lately, Mr. Thornhill?"

"Which, Lady Marston? for I have two."

"Charlie, I mean," said the lady.

"Indeed I have not. I wish I saw more of him."

"He's in very good company."

"If he's with you, Lady Marston," said the banker, who never paid a compliment. A disappointment in early life had shaken his faith in woman. He saw the woman who was plighted to him walk up the steps of St. George's Church on the arm of her father, and return down them in half an hour on the arm of a wealthy earl. He knew she had been cruelly tortured, sorely driven, but he never forgave her, though he would have shed his heart's blood to save her from pain. His sense of truth forbade him to excuse her falsehood. His love taught him to suffer in silence for her, but his sense of justice condemned the sacrifice. He saw her almost daily in his solitary ride or walk from Pall Mall to Bryanston Square, but her constancy and well-known trials pleaded unsuccessfully for her sex.

"He is with us: Frederick is very fond of him, and we are anxious to see what can be done for him. This unexpected

hitch about the Kildonald property, which we imagined was his, makes his case different from what it was a year ago. He must have a profession."

"He must, indeed." And the banker seemed to think it was the best thing for him. He crossed his foot upon his knee, and looked at Lady Marston.

"Have you no advice to offer on the subject? With your experience, I think you might assist him. What say you to a mercantile life?"

"Has he any taste for it? Does he care for drudgery, toil, uncertainty, loss of caste, change of companionship, and a thousand little trials, of which he has no idea." The banker was getting hard, as he thought what had sent him into the back parlour of a bank instead of into country fields and pleasant places.

"What he may have a taste for I do not know; but I have thought of your own profession."

"Mine is a trade, Lady Marston; more respectable, it is true, than many professions."

"And more lucrative."

"That's as it may be. But let me be sincere with you—as sincere as I can be on this point. He may go into my business, but into my house of business he never can come. There are reasons, insuperable reasons; and you know well, that if I thought I could serve him so, he might command me. But why not try something else—the army?"

"An ensigncy in a marching regiment is all to which he could aspire. But I think he should be consulted himself; he is old enough, at least, to have an inclination. What are his prospects?"

This was scarcely intended for a question, for Lady Marston, though truthful and earnest, was refined in mind. The banker, however, understood her cue, and without apparent embarrassment answered—

"His mother's jointure, when she dies, and, for the present, the money received from the uncompleted purchase."

"And that is all? The prospective advantages are distant."

"They are. But he shall never want a home while I live. And Charlie seems to have no lack of friends, if all I hear of your own kindness and Sir Frederick's be true. But he will never do for business."

"You are wrong, Mr. Thornhill. He is ignorant, and idle,

in the sense of learning ; but he has high principles, common sense, and much determination. I should have thought he would have done admirably in your own——”

“Trade, Lady Marston. Possibly : but I think not. You have great influence with him ; and the influence which is exercised by such as you upon a young man of his age, is the strongest and most valuable coadjutor he can have in any career. Give him my kind love, and do all you can to impress upon him the value of independence. It will raise him in his own estimation as well as others’, for it will place him above them ; and no man knows what four-and-twenty hours may bring forth. Believe me, Lady Marston, if he wants to enjoy a fortune really, he ought to make one.”

There was an end of the discussion. A few minutes devoted, as usual, to the weather, the chances of the present ministry, the educational scheme, and Lord Shaftesbury and his bishops, finished the conference, and with the same courtesy, and a cheek a little flushed, Henry Thornhill shook hands with Lady Marston, and heard her last order given, “To Howell and James’s,” with a sense of relief.

The banker was old for his years. Circumstances had made him so. English funds, and a contemplation of French rentes, American repudiation, and foreign politics, make a young man old, though I believe they keep a middle-aged man in excellent preservation. Like medicine, they should only be taken after a certain time, and as a remedy against something worse. Henry Thornhill had taken to them as an anodyne, and found his account in them. The battle of life is to the strong ; but if the strong be beaten down, he must be raised by powerful stimulants. No one ever knew why he was not in parliament. He knew himself. The mephitic vapours of political intrigue and dependence rendered the air of St. Stephen’s less palatable to the honest banker than to most men. He liked the life he led. He was unostentatious to a degree. One or two horses, a plain chariot which he seldom used, a good club dinner when alone, which was seldom, and an autumnal excursion into Scotland or Norfolk, to Homburg or Vienna, where he looked at a life with considerable amusement, of which, however, he was no participator. He had loved a woman ; since then he had learned to love work, and the dingy parlour at the back of those spacious premises in Pall Mall. He could give advice, even to Lady Marston, without offence. The accidents of his life, and his

position, gave him an authority beyond his years. No one knew what was locked up in him ; for he never exposed for sale more than what he knew to be marketable. His memories, his sadness, the sturdy bachelor kept to himself ; his experiences and his advice only for the friends, like Lady Marston, or his nephews, to whom he thought they were acceptable. He discovered a close acquaintance with the world, when he spoke of the influence exercised by a woman, like Lady Marston, upon a young man. It has a charm, a flattery in it, quite unequalled by any other friendship ; it softens, it consoles, it ennobles, and it cherishes the dying embers of a spirit of chivalry, the characteristic of a bygone age. The old cock so tough in the evening was tender enough in the morning. "Faisant la cour aux poules."

CHAPTER XVII.

GRILLED BONES.

"Alea, Scylla vorax, species certissima furti
Non contenta bonis animum, quoque perfida mergit."

WHEN Lady Marston reached home, she found a note from her *protégé*, excusing himself from dining in Grosvenor Square, as he was wont to do when engaged elsewhere. It rather disconcerted her plan, as she was dining at home alone, while Sir Frederick was at the House, expressly for the purpose of talking to Charlie. It would have been an excellent opportunity for a chat about his prospects, and for urging the adoption of a profession of some kind or other. His uncle's reserve on the subject of his own intentions created a vague alarm, which was confirmed by her previous conversation with her husband. As, however, it was pretty certain that that young gentleman would make his appearance only to dress, and the subject was not one to be discussed in a five minutes' conversation on a second-floor landing-place, she wisely determined upon postponing the business indefinitely. There could be no doubt about an opportunity occurring within a week or two at latest, notwithstanding the multifarious engagements of a London season. So she took her drive, and her dinner, and listened to Grisi for an hour or

two, chatted sociably with half a dozen dandies, who amused her, and with one clever man whom she amused, and returned comfortably to bed at a reasonable hour.

Whilst she had been talking to the worthy banker, Charlie had been spending his morning less profitably. Exactly opposite Cambridge House, he had been overtaken by his father's old acquaintance, Lord Dorrington, who hailed him with that good-humoured simplicity which is so flattering from eight lustres to four.

"Where now, Charlie?" said the jolly nobleman, who, beyond a tight boot (physically) and a twinge of '34 claret, knew no trouble, "going my way?"

Of course he was, or any other way that suited him; an idler or a more accommodating young man than Charlie Thornhill was not, at that time, to be met with; he had not even a pleasure in prospect to bore him. It was not long before he had confided to Lord Dorrington his intention of going to Scotland in the autumn, and from there accompanying Tom to Melton, unless his brother should take to the hounds in his own country; an improbable thing for the next three or four years, as they were just now in the hands of a young nobleman, who might be expected to last that time at least, though not much beyond it.

"I must have two or three horses of my own, for Tom's such a good fellow, that if I don't buy one or two, he'll be increasing his number, and there's no necessity for that."

"There's a horse of Putney's at Tattersall's now, that would pay for summering, and that would just suit you; he's fast, and a capital fencer, but wants a little riding, which I hear you can do for him."

Charlie blushed; but he knew Lord Dorrington to be a good judge, and Captain Putney (when I first introduced him, he was only a cornet) to be a straight man over a country. So he sauntered on to the corner of Park Lane, where he took courage to say that he would go to Tattersall's and look at him.

Having made up his mind that the "Ironmaster" (so called from his late owner) would be cheap enough at 120 guineas, he walked once more along Piccadilly till he reached Bolton Street. After hesitating a moment, he knocked at a gloomy-looking door, whose portals opened at the summons into a more gloomy-looking hall.

"Is Lord Carlingford at home?"

"No, sir," said the man; "but Mr. Thornhill and Sir George Barrington are just come in, so that I dare say his lordship will not be long."

"Sir George Barrington," said Charlie, half aloud, "then I'll go up."

At the same time a groom of the chambers appeared, and Charlie followed him along hollow-sounding passages to a room on the ground floor. Nothing could present a greater contrast to the darkness of the passage he had quitted than the light and comfort of the room into which he was shown. It was a billiard-room of very large size, made comfortable by the light from above, and by all the appendages which modern taste requires. There were books, pictures, arm-chairs, and sofas of every description. Sir George was chalking his cue, preparatory to a stroke, and Tom Thornhill was lighting a cigar, at the moment that his brother entered. Both stopped in their avocations for a minute, and welcomed our hero with the greatest cordiality. Sir George was not a favourite of Charlie's, and he viewed his present occupation with considerable distrust. He knew him to be a gambler: alas! he knew one very near and dear to him to be one too. But he knew him to be unprincipled, ungenerous, and licentious; living without means, save such as he filched from his unsuspecting victims, and this at the rate of some thousands a year. He was admitted into, or rather tolerated in, society; but mothers shuddered when they heard of him as the associate of their sons. He was an adept at all games of skill, and report said, a still greater adept at games of chance. But he was a first-rate pistol shot; had already killed his man in a not very creditable fray; and it was pleasanter to say it of him, than to his face. As to Tom Thornhill, he would as soon have believed in his want of honour, as in his own. Charlie took a different view of the case.

The game proceeded; one hundred up. Thornhill had made a good break, and left off within ten points of the game. "I can take three hundred to one," said Sir George, who was about five-and-twenty behind, with a bad break. "I'll lay it," said Tom Thornhill. And certainly it looked like a good bet. Here Sir George cursed his luck, chalked his cue, and threw away his cigar. He made a difficult following cannon, which brought the balls together; and immediately after ran up the game to ninety all. His own ball was over the middle pocket, the red ball in baulk. Sir George's break of twenty-five had reduced

the betting to evens, with Tom Thornhill for choice. He made six by holeing his own ball off his adversary in the middle pocket three times, but unfortunately brought his adversary back into baulk, thus leaving himself nothing on the table. Sir George then made the game. Tom looked disappointed; not at the loss of the money, but the game. He was easily persuaded that luck was against him, and put on his coat with a re-assurance that he could have won. Charlie had watched the game narrowly, and knew better.

"*Au revoir*," said Barrington, as he took his leave; "I shall not wait for Carlingford." And the brothers were alone.

"What do you do to-night, Charlie?"

"Nothing particular. I was going back to dine at the Marstons'; they're alone to-night, and I can please myself."

"Then come down to Richmond, and dine with me. Here comes Carlingford; he or I will drive you down. There will be only ourselves, De Beauvoir, the Punter, and Barrington."

Lord Carlingford entered the room. He looked like a gentleman, but strength of mind was not his characteristic.

"What did you do with Barrington?—How do, Thornhill?" added he, seeing Charlie.

"Lost when I was a red hazard off the game."

Charlie hesitated a moment, and as suddenly consented to make one of the dinner-party.

"Well, then, I'll call for you in Grosvenor Square at half-past five." And Charlie took leave for the present.

As he strolled slowly along Piccadilly towards Bond Street, his thoughts employed on his brother Tom, who was his *beau idéal* of every perfection in man, he ran against one of those profound busybodies, who love to astonish boys with their *savoir vivre*, and acquaintance with the *on dits* of society. Frank Tuftenham was five years Charlie's senior, was a clerk in the Foreign Office, had a bowing and scraping acquaintance with everybody, and was intimate with nobody. He was a small, intrusive sort of man, and though a small brilliant is worth a whole dust-heap, Charlie Thornhill was a giant in every respect to the sallow-looking official, as he called himself.

"Weren't you at school with Dacre, Thornhill?"

"What, Teddy Dacre? Of course I was. I should like to see Teddy again; I haven't seen him this year or more. Where is he?"

"He's in Town. I thought you knew them very well; he

always talks about you to everybody. But what a pity it is that pretty sister of his is going to be married to that fool De Beauvoir."

Charlie felt rather uncomfortable; and though Tufttenham was perfectly unconscious, he could not help thinking that he was looking at his rising colour. The fact is, he was red-hot to the roots of the hair; and old Thoroughgood's dinner had inflicted a wound a great deal more lasting than the headache he rose with on the following morning. Still Charlie could not shake him off. His conversation had the power of a basilisk; there was no escape, though the poor fellow felt that it was death to stop. This was a skinning he had hardly bargained for; for if ever a young gentleman of twenty years of age had allowed concealment, like a worm, and so forth, it was Charlie. Between ourselves, he was very much in love indeed, for an absentee. Then his agreeable friend continued, "I do hope there's nothing in that report that's going the round of the clubs about Sir George Barrington and your brother!"

"What the devil's that?" said Charlie, with considerable energy.

"Oh! I beg ten thousand pardons—I ought never to have said a word: of course I concluded that you had heard all about it."

"Not I; let's have it."

"Well, they do say that Barrington has won five thousand of him, and two of Carlingford. Of course I only repeat what I have heard."

"I don't believe a word of it." But Charlie painfully recalled the game of billiards of the morning. "Do you know Barrington?"

"Rob a church, I should think," was the official's reply. "About the greatest swindler in London. Adieu, Thornhill!"

Charlie Thornhill's reflections were sombre, as he sauntered up Bond Street towards Grosvenor Square: he began to think there was something of truth in the *on dits* of the day: as he determined that the De Beauvoir engagement was well founded, he could not altogether disbelieve the one about Tom and Sir George Barrington. "He is a thief," said Charlie to himself; "I was sure of it."

The drive down to Richmond was cheerful enough in itself. The charming spirits of Tom Thornhill, the quick-stepping ponies—a new purchase of Tom's—the clanking of the pole

chains, the sparkling river with its hundred boats, and hearts as light as its waters, the budding verdure, and the fresh air, all combined to drive away the gloomy spirits of Charlie. He could not help remarking on the way down, however, to his brother, that he didn't like Barrington.

"I know that, Charlie."

"How?"

"You're always so infernally polite to him, when *we* can scarcely get a civil word out of you."

"I mean to be so: they don't speak highly of him."

"Poor devil!—I suppose he's lots of enemies, like everybody else who hasn't money enough to buy a good opinion."

"He might have laid out some of his late gains, then advantageously; he ought to be pretty flush."

"I suppose some fool or other has been exaggerating the case, Charlie. A few hundreds aren't much for a fellow that's been plucked as he has." Tom was getting a little warm in his friend's cause, so Charlie reserved any communications he might have for another opportunity: and a few more minutes brought them to the Castle.

"Lord Carlingford come yet,"

"No, sir, but his lordship's room is ready," replied the obsequious waiter, with a flourish of his napkin. "Dinner at seven, sir."

"Come, Charlie, let's go into the garden, and look at the boats," and in another minute they were lounging over the wall. The gardens were gay with fashionable men and well-dressed women, who strolled up and down, or sat on the wall, or occupied the seats scattered about. It was a pleasant scene enough; that lovely river, and the life that sparkled on and around it. It makes young men forget, and old men remember: it's a glorious place to moralize.

There's old Brownwigg, I wonder what he's regretting: his past life, probably, and that it can't come over again, as he smokes his cheroot under the shadow of those cool dining-rooms, which only remind me of the infernal regions in ice, and look at Henry Careless; it's true he is meditating, with folded arms and leaden heart, upon his eighteen thousand a year reduced in as many years to as many hundreds: but it is only that he might have it again to spend twice as fast. It is strewed with regrets, that Castle garden, but not with regrets of the right sort,

In the meantime the guests had arrived, and Tom and his brother turned back to welcome them.

Lord Carlingford was chewing a tooth-pick, from which he seemed to derive considerable satisfaction, if not nourishment ; even that exertion was almost too much for him after his drive. De Beauvoir and Sir George Barrington had come down together. The former presented an object of much interest to Charlie since the morning ; and he was compelled to admit, that if he was a fool he was a very good-looking one : his companion looked as *blasé* and washed out as any other naturally delicate gentleman who has lived upon nothing but excitement up to the age of thirty. The Punter was a roystering, jovial, natural sort of person, of about five-and-twenty—very large, very stout, very loud in every way ; his name was Cressingham, and he had obtained his sobriquet of Punter from a supposed love for that amusement, rather than from any real predilection for the game ; he was not averse to throwing a main when it came in his way, but, with the exception of Charlie, was probably the least fond of play of any of the party. I had almost forgotten to mention two not unimportant items in the list. On a large sofa, enveloped in peach-coloured silk and muslin, with a corresponding amount of point lace and jewellery, sat two pretty women : the elder of the two was known by the name of the “Peeress.” She was just now pouting and affecting great disgust that her particular favourite, Major Nuggett of the Plungers, had not been invited. The other lady, Mrs. De Beauvoir, was indulging in anticipations of dinner, a very favourite pastime with her : she was younger and fairer than her companion, and declared her inability to talk at present. “Lor’ bless us, Sir George, don’t bother so. Who’s to do anything until we’ve had something to eat?”

The Peeress, *née* Mary Armstrong, had been elevated to the peerage from widowhood, after an alliance, offensive and defensive, with a wealthy stockbroker called Simpson ; Mrs. De Beauvoir had been formerly bedchamber woman to the “Hen and Chickens” at Birmingham, under the name of Sally Jones, and took her first step towards her present elevation through a celebrated tinman of her adopted town. I am naturally loth to introduce these ladies to the notice of my readers, but the novelist deals with society as he finds it, and Truth is stronger than Decorum.

If we except one little oath which slipped out of the Peeress’s

mouth by accident, and two glasses too much of champagne on the part of the other lady, their conduct was unexceptional; and so we may take our leave of them, merely adding, that with some difficulty they were persuaded to order their brougham at ten o'clock, instead of continuing to gamble for half-sovereigns with a couple of dinner knives at the Castle.

I am compelled to state, with regret, that the dinner was not up to the mark. The Punter was the only person who felt really aggrieved; his jolly nature always attached itself to the present, and he was an excellent judge of what he thought good. The rest were scarcely competent to decide upon the delicacies of a French carte, not so common then as now: and certainly Barrington had come to Richmond with other views than the mere accident of a dinner. The champagne was guiltless of the province or banks of the Marne, and the claret had to be twice changed before it was pronounced drinkable.

The conversation at a Richmond dinner is not always worth preservation: the evening passed cheerfully enough, if not very rationally: Charlie never talked much; he probably, like the parrot, thought the more. He could not help looking at Barrington with a shade of suspicion; but before dinner was over it gave place to a pleasanter feeling, and he began to think that he might be mistaken, and that Tufttenham was but a gossip at the best of times. He was not *au fait* at all the subjects discussed, for Charlie almost despised the life he was obliged to lead some part of the year, and felt more at home in the Warren at Thornhills, and with his four-footed favourites, than in the middle of St. James's Street, amongst the fashionable acquaintance of his brother Tom. To tell the truth, he had quite brains enough to despise the empty-headed, and to feel his own deficiencies amongst those who were worthy of better things. The next Derby, and the last fight, will not last for ever as topics of conversation. The Opera, and the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race had their turn. Carlingford's shooting and Tom's new hack did good service. By the time they had arrived at the Cheswick fête, and the gentlemen and the players, most of the company was anxious for some more engaging excitement; and when Tom proposed a game at hazard, which he was quite certain to do sooner or later, no one but Charlie regretted it, and certainly no one said him nay.

Why are we all gamblers—North and South, East and West; the most civilized, the most savage? The Malay, who runs

a-muck, after everything in the world that he has, excepting his clothing, which may be considered *nil*, is gone. 'The Frenchman or the Englishman, who, in running a-muck, loses his everything—reputation and honour not unfrequently included. The former literally becomes the prey of his acquaintance, and goes forth like a wild beast to kill or to be killed. The latter having stood to be shot at, takes his turn in victimizing his friends. The having been the loser of many thousands seems to be an excuse or apology for every enormity. Our friend did it, because he has been done. The Russian lights a fire at his heart, which burns as fiercely as the South American: and whilst the latter washes out his losses in the blood of his opponent, the former scatters his own brains upon the steps of the Kursaal at Wiesbaden or Homburgh. 'Tom, Tom, would that a warning might come in time' thinks Charlie: there is a flaw in his idol, but it is none the less an idol for that.

So down they sit, and the rest look on. The gladiators of old afforded a game which destroyed the combatants, and the grave old Romans looked on and applauded; but then they were their slaves or their enemies. The fine old Briton will watch with interest a game which destroys his friends or foes. They begin with hazard. "Seven!" said Tom; "eleven!"—the nick, and he wins. He throws in a few mains, and wins a hundred, taking the odds. His blood is warm by the time he has thrown crabs, and is out. "Five!" says Lord Carlingford. "Seven to five!" cries Sir George Barrington; and five it is. "Pass the box, Carlingford. Charlie!" "No, thank you," said Charlie. "I'll look on; I never play:" and they respect the scruples of a younger son. Besides, it is so much better, for "he's not over sharp, you know, and would certainly fall asleep in the middle of it. I think that would be the time to shave his eyebrows." He's not asleep now. Before long the luck began to change, and, like a true gambler, Tom Thornhill clung to ill luck with considerable perseverance.

"More claret, waiter, and light those lamps on the mantelpiece," said his lordship. "De Beauvoir, what have you won?"

"A couple of hundred only," said the fool, the *fiancé*, the blindfold goose at Christmas amongst the Swabian girls. "Barrington is the winner."

And so he was. And Tom continued to take the odds, and to bet them, as Barrington called "Five?" and threw seven. "Eight mains! why, you'd break a bank." And Tom got more

and more excited, and displayed an eagerness from which Charlie boded no good for that night. "Let's have a bone and a glass of champagne;" and up came the gooseberry, this time *à la française*, not before it was appreciated by one of the party at least. Tom began to feel feverish; Lord Carlingford was limper than usual, and not disposed to risk any more money on himself or Tom Thornhill, whom he had been backing; De Beauvoir decided upon going; and the Punter was fast asleep on the sofa with six new ten-pound notes in his pocket, which he had won, and pocketed in the most jovial manner, without any regard to the pocket out of which it had come. The grilled bones and champagne, however, so far revived the party, that Tom, who vowed he would have nothing more to do with the dice five minutes before, now proposed a game at écarté as a compromise between his conscience and his desire for play.

"Come, De Beauvoir, one game for a pony."

"Impossible, Tom. I must be off: there's my horse catching cold underneath that confounded pernice all this time."

"I'll take a hand," said Lord Carlingford.

"And I," said Cressingham.

Barrington said nothing, but took the cards and a seat. His face was flushed with triumph; he looked confident, as well he might; to continue was only the gamester's principle of backing his luck: écarté with such men as Tom Thornhill and Carlingford was Sir George's promised land in possession.

Again the play was fast and furious. Tom began to hold cards. He got back some of his money from Carlingford, and would have recovered some of the ill-gotten gains of the baronet, who, however, was always ready to lay or take the odds, and by some combination of talent brought off the majority of his ventures. The king seemed obsequious for so great a person. Time wore on, and Cressingham was again upon the sofa, having lost a trifle, and the peer had already sent for soda-water and the bill. Still Tom played on, cursing his fortune and doubling his stakes, till the sum became serious. Charlie in the meantime had not been asleep. He was not given to admiring himself, but in the feverish silence of the two players and the drowsy stupidity of the non-combatants, had taken refuge in the mirror, which surmounted the mantel-piece, and which was at the back of Sir George Barrington's chair. His attention was divided between his own well-parted hair and a china shepherdess of the reign of George II, which formed one of the ornaments of the

chimney-piece, when he saw, what he had never seen in polite society before, the hand of Sir George Barrington secrete a card in the tail pocket of his dress coat, out of which peeped the corner of his cambric pocket-handkerchief. Charlie's first impulse was to proclaim the fact ; but Charlie was a thinker as well as a man of action, and determined upon waiting. Again he turned his attention to the game. Tom won : the stakes had been lowered. Again Tom won : and again the stakes were raised. Sir George looked at his watch.

"Come, Thornhill, we must finish ; one more game."

'What's to become of the card ?' thought Charlie.

The game proceeded.

"Cards ?"

"If you please."

"How many ?"

"Tout la boutique."

"The king," said Tom, who had taken to smoking, and emitted a volume of vapour. Charlie had also lighted a cigar, and stood on the right hand of Sir George, a short distance from the table, apparently wishing that Tom and he were in the phaeton again. Still the game proceeded slowly.

"The trick," said Barrington : "two to your one."

Again Tom scored.

"Even," said the Punter, with an ill-suppressed yawn.

Two deals followed in Tom's favour, and again he laid two to one. The next hand was held by Tom : and the baronet held the king, and made the trick.

"Even again, by Jove ! your odds look badly, Tom," said the Punter, as he rose, and proceeded to uncork a soda-water bottle.

'The time must be come,' thought Charlie, who sucked at his cigar as if nothing extraordinary was about to happen, but edged a little further round towards Sir George's right.

"You've laid me two hundred to one on the game, as a finish," said he to Thornhill, who was no longer so collected as in the earlier part of the game, and chafed a little at the unexpected turn of the game. "You've laid me two hundred to one ; I'll lay it you off even now, if you like, Thornhill : it's four all." The hands lay on the table.

"Done !" said Tom.

The baronet suddenly stood in need of his handkerchief before turning the trump. Holding then the pack in his left hand, he put his right hand behind his back, and drew out a

perfectly scented and elaborately marked French cambric, as innocent of deceit, to all appearance, as the wooden horse of the Greeks. His hand had barely reached his hip, however, when with one stride and the quickness of lightning his wrist was seized as in a vice by the right hand of Charlie and the back of his collar by the left hand of the same apathetic individual. A violent struggle ensued of a second's duration, in which the lamp fell to the ground, calling Lord Carlingford's attention from his bill, and shooting the bottle of soda-water all over the Punter's shirt-front.

"Charlie, you're mad!" said Tom.

"What the devil's the matter?" said Cressingham, coming to the rescue.

"Bring the light here, or bring us to the light: here's foul play here. It's no use, Sir George," said Charlie. "I've not watched you to-night for nothing," as Barrington struggled fiercely in the grasp of one of the most powerful fellows in Town. "It's no use: I'll have the card that's in your hand, if I tear you limb from limb."

"Speak, Barrington. What in the world is it?" at last said Lord Carlingford.

"I've no card in my hand; the man's drunk or mad."

"No, he's dropped it: his foot's upon it. Pick it up, Tom."

The Punter saved him the trouble. "By G——, sir, it's the king of clubs!"

The announcement restored four of the party to their equanimity, the fifth stood pale, trembling, and discomposed. Lord Carlingford was quite himself again as he said, with the politest of bows, "Perhaps, Sir George, you had better order your carriage; mine will be round in a minute or two." Barrington was gone.

The termination to the night's amusement was abrupt enough, though none too soon. The waiter announced Lord Carlingford's carriage and Mr. Thornhill's phaeton in a few minutes, during which not one of the party referred to the transaction, excepting by an epithet not complimentary to the absent guest, backed by a very strong expletive. They had already left the room, when Charlie returned for a glove that was left behind. The light was still in the room, and as he entered, between the door and the table at which the struggle had taken place, he trod upon something hard and sharp. As he moved his foot he stooped to ascertain the cause, and found a die.

"Waiter," said Charlie to that functionary, "does this belong to you?"

"No, sir; I've just put two pair by that the gentlemen have been using this evening."

"Look again."

"Yes, sir, they're all right: they belong to the board, sir."

"Very good. You're quite certain——. I thought I heard something drop." And he put the die carefully into his waistcoat pocket. "Good night."

"Good night, sir," said the waiter. In three quarters of an hour he was in Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO BREAKFASTS.

"Falsely luxurious, will not man awake,
And springing from the bed of sloth, enjoy
The cool, the fragrant, and the silent hour."
THOMSON—*Seasons*.

On the morning following the little dinner at Richmond, which had ended not so pleasantly as it had begun, Charlie Thornhill was not up so early as usual. He was an early riser on ordinary occasions, and had that happy peculiarity of allowing nothing to interfere with his usual habits. On the present occasion he was a little late. He had an idea that the less said about the previous evening's occupation to Lady Marston or Sir Frederick the better. She was apt to ask inconvenient questions, and Charlie was a bad dissembler; so he kept out of the way.

Having delayed his shaving, which was, however, *très peu de chose*, as long as he could, and having taken extraordinary care in the selection of the articles of apparel for the morning, a thing he was generally careless about, he reached the breakfast-room some time after Lady Marston had left it, and Sir Frederick had gone to his club. His appetite was remarkably good, as sound, indeed, as his sleep had been, a thing which only lasts to about the age of thirty, and he rang with intense satisfaction for more eggs, and another roll or two: and—"Jobson, just bring in the ham if there is any left; the one we had at dinner the day before yesterday." Charlie was a first-rate judge of ham.

"Certainly, sir," said Jobson, as he placed a fresh-boiled egg in front of the late comer, and laid the "Times" on an approximate chair. At the same time he poured out a cup of tea and presented it. Jobson was an excellent servant, and as careful of his master's friends as of his master himself.

Charlie had just broken the crown of his second egg, and was wishing the cutlets were made hot again, when a cabriolet stopped with a jerk at the door, and a loud and prolonged knock proclaimed a fashionable arrival thus early in the day. The breakfast-room door was not quite closed, and an impatient, imperious voice was heard outside, "Is Mr. Thornhill at home?"

"This is Sir Frederick Marston's, sir," said the footman; "Mr. *Charles* Thornhill is staying here: he is at breakfast at present."

"Take that card to him and say I will wait."

"Will you walk into the library, sir," said the servant, as he preceded the owner of the quiet but well-appointed equipage which had turned the corner when he knocked at the door.

"A gentleman wishing to see you, sir," said the servant, presenting the card on a waiter.

"Captain Charteris, 8th Hussars," read Charlie. "Ask if he is sure it is not my brother whom he wishes to see?" Charlie had heard of Captain Charteris, but had no more idea of the purport of his visit to him, than if he had been announced as the Emperor of China.

"Captain Charteris believes he has made no mistake, sir, and if you will allow him to wait until you can see him, a few words of explanation is all he wishes."

"Is that Captain Charteris's message?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then ask him to walk in here, if he will excuse ceremony."

Captain Charteris did walk in, without ceremony. He was a good-looking but dissipated man, some years Charlie's senior, dressed to perfection, and bearing evident marks of good birth and the habits of good society. Charlie apologized for the lateness of his breakfast, a very unnecessary piece of politeness, as it was far in advance of the Captain's usual hour for that meal, and he yawned accordingly. He had been obliged to call thus early in consequence of the peculiar nature of his business. Charlie was more in the dark than ever.

"Excuse me, Captain Charteris; are you sure that it is not

intended for my brother? if so, he is in Grosvenor Place, I believe." Charlie was not anxious to hear what might be intended for Tom's private edification.

"I think I am under no mistake. May I ask if you were not at a dinner yesterday at Richmond? Sir George Barrington was one of the party." A light dawned upon Thornhill; yet he never could be such a fool, thought he, as to send the man here.

"I was there, with my brother, Lord Carlingford, and some other gentlemen. Sir George Barrington was one of the party."

"Then, Mr. Thornhill, if I say that I come from him, you can be under no misapprehension as to the nature of my visit."

"Indeed, Captain Charteris, I am sorry to ask you to explain yourself, for I can hardly believe that Sir George can have asked you to call upon me for an apology or an explanation."

"I thank you very much for saving me an unpleasant task; it is the very purport of my visit this morning; but I am charged with no request for an apology, but for the name of a friend who may arrange a more satisfactory meeting at once. Personal violence admits of no explanation."

"You are Sir George Barrington's friend?"

"I am."

"You know him well?"

"I think I do."

"Excuse my saying, Captain Charteris, that you do not, or you would not be here this morning. I don't know much about these matters, though I suppose one always fights with gentlemen. I certainly don't intend to fight Sir George Barrington."

"Stay, Mr. Thornhill, I think I said Sir George was a personal friend of mine. I can allow no such insinuations against——"

"I insinuate nothing; I state a bare fact: and though I give no explanation to Sir George, I admit one is due to you;" and here Charlie helped himself to an additional lump of sugar, and rang the bell.

Captain Charteris's brow grew dark, and he pushed up the fingers of his right-hand glove, as if he itched for a hair-trigger: he awaited in silence further communication. In the mean time the butler answered the bell.

"Send up to my dressing-room for a small paper parcel that the groom brought back from Bond Street an hour ago. I detected Sir George Barrington in a gross act of cheating at cards

last night, when playing with my brother—a card secreted in his pocket, and proving to be a ‘king’ at a rather interesting point of the game.”

“That,” said Captain Charteris, rising from his seat, “has been already satisfactorily explained to me.”

“I regret to say that it has to be satisfactorily explained to others, as well, before any gentleman can consent to meet him.” At this moment a servant entered with the small packet, and gave it to Thornhill, “Do me the favour to unfold that paper, I have already seen its contents.” The captain deliberately undid the packet, and somewhat to his surprise discovered, under many folds, a loaded die broken in two, in a most artistic manner. “In the scuffle that took place the die dropped from Sir George’s pocket. I was so unfortunate as to find it,”—here a loud knock announced another visitor—“I sent it this morning to be broken by Lady Marston’s jeweller.”

“Lord Carlingford,” said the servant, throwing open the door, and that gentleman stepped languidly into the room. “Ah, Charteris! I heard you were here, or coming here, and I followed you. Thornhill can’t fight him; the thing’s impossible.” Here the peer threw himself into an arm-chair, and smiled grimly. “I suppose you know all about it?”

“I know it all now,” said the captain, “and have to apologise myself; curse his impudence: to make me a catspaw in such an affair as this: a cursed——”

“Swindler, you would say. You’re right: now drive me back to St. James’s Street, that’s a good fellow, and——”

“Wait a minute, Lord Carlingford, you don’t know all”—and here Charlie supplied the requisite information about the dice. “Now, Captain Charteris, I must ask a favour of you. Keep this to yourself: if Sir George Barrington is out of England in four-and-twenty hours, I, for one, will say nothing of this part of the business, and I think I can ask the same of Lord Carlingford, and the men who were with us last night. But if I ever hear of his playing with any man in this country again, it shall follow him into every club-house in London. There’s no necessity for further scandal: we are all well out of it. Some of us lost our ready money: he won’t be bold enough to present his paper when he knows the termination of this interview.” Here Charlie finished his cup of tea; it was the longest consecutive speech he had ever made. He was a man of action rather than of words.

As when a peacock, rejoicing in the sunshine, spreads his tail to the beams, and struts imperiously before the spectator, so had Captain Charteris disported himself in behalf of his friend ; but as when some dark and unsuspected cloud dims the lustre of his pride, the same bird drops his feathers, and drags them on the ground, so did the gallant captain retire from the scene of his discomfiture ; not, however, without a friendly greeting to our hero did he leave the room, followed by Lord Carlingford ; whilst Charlie rang the bell, and intimated his wants in the monosyllabic words "the door."

In the course of the day Sir George Barrington received an intimation in such plain terms that he would neither be paid nor shot at, that he took the advice of his friends and left England never to return. In the course of a few days it was all over the west end of London, as the "greatest secret possible," "not to be mentioned on any account," with every malversation, exaggeration, and addition that many-tongued Rumour delights in, and without which the world would be very stale, flat, and unprofitable in the eyes of its devotees.

Some little time after this, when the season was on the wane, and people were beginning to make those pleasant little arrangements for the autumn which is to be regarded as a rest from the fatigues of a London summer, Mr. Dacre stood looking on to the dusty leaves and parched flowers of Bryanston Square, where he had taken a good-sized but moderately expensive house for three months. He was waiting somewhat impatiently for his breakfast, as might be seen by the manner in which he measured the difference between his watch and the plain, unornamented clock that clicked on the mantel-piece. In a few minutes, however, Mrs. Dacre made her appearance, and rang the bell for the breakfast. At the same time as the urn came Edith, and the three sat down, though two vacant napkins remained unoccupied.

"Now, my dear, let me have some tea as soon as possible, for I am going to be busy this morning ; I have to see that bay horse, which Edward wants for the winter, if he's not too much money."

"I beg your pardon, we are so much later here than at Gillsland ; and now that the girls are going out it makes a difference to us all ; but I thought you were going to see Lord Tiverton ?"

"So I am, after the committee at the House, about the attachéship."

"Lady Tiverton was very gracious last night, and I think if she can do anything for Edward she will."

"She can do nothing in this matter. She manages everybody and everything excepting the foreign policy of the country; and is a most excellent and insincere person as you know, Isabel, as well as I; but where's Alice?"

"Up-stairs, papa, dear; she'll be down directly; she's a little tired with her ball," said Edith, smiling with that happy glow which is the indescribable result of good health, good humour, and the most becoming morning toilette possible. "Here she comes, and Teddy too."

Our old friend Teddy Dacre had become a great swell: he had lately passed an examination, in which it was ascertained that he could spell the words "despatch," "Mediterranean," and a very useful sentence, in which a "pedlar," and a "meddler," played a conspicuous part with a "medlar;" and "ecstasy," and "extacy," were placed before him to test the effects of fifteen years of Latin and Greek derivations, sapphics, alcaics, elegiacs, and Greek iambs. Having passed this ordeal satisfactorily, with the one exception of spelling "achievement" "hatchment," he held up his head amongst the butterflies, late grubs, who lounged at Limmer's, the Clarendon, and Long's; who played at Pratt's, and betted at Tattersall's; who rode on high-stepping hacks in the Park, and on neat ponies at Newmarket; who threw away time and money at Pole's, Carlin's, Anderson's, and Howell and James's; who passed their days in smoking and idleness, and their nights in the doorways of dowagers, and in the smiles of beauty; or in the effervescence of champagne suppers, and a wit as sparkling as it was delusive. Every one wondered how Teddy Dacre managed it—how the earthen pot swam among the brazen vessels. Gilsland was nursing, for Dacre was an only son; and though not large, certain; and Lady Elizabeth Montagu Mastodon was his godmamma. What a comfort is such a christening to truly pious parents! And now the fling was nearly over. Lord Tiverton was about to make an *attaché* to Berne, in Switzerland.

Alice walked steadily, almost gravely to her father, and kissed his forehead; and then to her mother, to whom she paid the same compliment on the cheek, saying at the same time: "I beg your pardon for being late. I see breakfast is half over, but I was tired with the ball."

"How you can ever be tired, Alice, dear," said her sister, "I

can't think. You have all the best partners, wherever you go, all night long."

"Perhaps that's the reason, Edith," said Mr. Dacre.

"I'm sure I could dance for ever if I could get such men as Alice has."

"Who do you mean, dear?"

"Oh! I don't know, if you don't," said the charming girl, and eyes, and mouth, and light-brown hair, and every limb laughed, to the tips of her rosy fingers.

"Who did you dance with, come, tell us, Alice?" said mamma, who, perhaps, had some better reason for asking, than mere curiosity.

Alice put up her head, and smiled only with her eyes. She blushed very slightly. "Well, then, mamma, I danced with Lord Claremont."

"That was kind of him, particularly with so many old women who wanted partners." Mrs. Dacre had no mercy on mediæval Terpsichoreans.

"Lord Claremont likes me; and he knows I prefer middle-aged men."

"We know you always say so, Alice," said her sister. "Tell us some of the young ones; surely they were not all on the shady side of forty?"

"Mr. Sullivan, Captain Charteris, Lord Carlingford."

"Carlingford!" said Teddy, "what did he talk about? I like Carlingford."

"So do I; but his conversation was not interesting enough to carry much away; it was very like your own: then there was Charlie Thornhill."

"He's a misogynist," said Teddy Dacre.

"My goodness, Teddy!" said Edith, "what a dreadful name: oh, I know what you mean; one of those horrid animals before the Flood, that Professor Owen talks about."

"There were not so many before the Flood as since; a misogynist, Edith, is a woman-hater," said Mr. Dacre.

"Then I'm sure Charlie Thornhill is not that," said Alice, with the slightest possible look at her sister, who didn't bear the scrutiny well.

"Go on with the list, Alice."

"You keep on interrupting one so: then came George Verulam, who waltzes beautifully; the man they call the Punter, I don't know his name; Baron Nathan Goldstick,

Barclay Smythe, and three or four more: I really can't go through the whole of them."

"Wasn't Mr. Thornhill one? I saw him dancing with you, Alice."

"Yes, he was;" and after a moment's hesitation, she added, "I like Mr. Thornhill, he's so cheerful, and so very natural."

"Is that uncommon, Alice?"

"Extremely so, sir," said she, turning her handsome eyes on her father: "the men give us but little credit for brains, or are sadly deficient themselves: now you know why I like middle-aged men, papa. Do you know Mr. Thornhill?"

"Yes, he's coming this winter for a week to Gilsland from Melton, or wherever his horses are. He wishes to see our side of the country. Where are you going, Edward, to-day?"

"To Greenwich, sir, to dinner. The teams are going out, and I am going with Wilson Graves."

"What a pity! It's Chiswick fête, and Alice and I are going with Lady Elizabeth," said Edith, "there will be nobody there." What an elastic sort of word is "nobody;" it comprehends upon occasion four-fifths of the people in England.

"I don't think Wilson Graves is a very good companion for you, Edward. I'm told he plays, and very high. I could forgive almost anything but gambling."

"I don't see how I can get off now," said Teddy, who was unable to defend his friend; "I promised to go down. If you do not wish it, I'll not do so again, but there will be no play to-night—certainly not at Greenwich."

"He was said, some years back, to have been the cause of poor Ludlow's death."

"I never heard the report or the story."

"Perhaps not. Fred Ludlow lost a large fortune gambling. He had determined upon leaving England. His passage was taken for one of the colonies. The remains of his once good property was in his banker's hands; £5000 ready for a start in mercantile life. Wilson Graves met him two days before sailing; rallied him on his determined reformation; ate with him, drank with him, took him to Crockford's: at five o'clock on a summer's morning he walked down the steps of that pandemonium, having given his last cheque to the croupier, with one sovereign in his pocket. A beggar is said to have held out his hat to him (Wilson Graves tells the story), 'Here's a sovereign, my man; I hope it may be of use to you, it's none to me.'

He was found one hour afterwards by his servant in his arm-chair, having destroyed himself with prussic acid. Few men could have known that, and have played after it. I would rather follow you to your grave, my boy, than out of a gambling-house." It was a fancy of Mr. Dacre's. He had odd notions of right and wrong for a man of fashion.

Alice listened to her father, on whom she doted. There was an unnatural brightness again in her eyes, but her cheek looked a little sadder and lost its colour. Was she thinking of Teddy's future? It is possible.

Mr. Dacre looked at the bay horse for his son, and did not think him short enough in the leg for a heavy country; he was also a little hot. He had a satisfactory interview with Lord Tiverton, who had not forgotten his promise. He feared Berne was not so pleasant as St. Petersburg, but it was not so cold, and not so expensive. He had heard a charming account of the Misses Dacre from Lady Tiverton, who was enchanted with them, and would leave cards for them on the first opportunity. Mr. Dacre had forgotten the gambling and was a happy man.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EARLY STAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL MALADY.

"But you are no such man; you are rather point-device in your accoutrements; as loving yourself, than securing the love of any other."—*As You Like It, Act III, sc. 2.*

LADY ELIZABETH arrived in Bryanston Square about 4.30 p.m. to take the girls to Chiswick. We have before said she was good, kind, clever, and vulgar. She never willingly hurt feelings, but she was not quick of perception; and sometimes blundered upon a soft corn. She generally took her foot away, if the patient hallooed loud enough, and in doing so gave it a second rub.

"Lor' bless me, Edith, what a mountain of muslin you look like! Do you know that my husband is in the carriage? You'll never get into it in that state."

"Don't be alarmed, my dear Lady Elizabeth ; I'm naturally small you know ; so that I should really be lost among you all, if I hadn't something on."

"Something, my dear ; of course have something. Look at me now : to be sure I'm stout enough ; but your head is preposterously small for your body. Where's Alice?"

"Here," said the young lady, as she opened the door.

"Now don't you think Edith's petticoats too large, dear : unbecomingly so?" said the old lady in a rather imperious tone of voice.

"No, I don't, Lady Elizabeth ; I think she's charming, positively charming. You see if Mr. Mastodon doesn't think so too ; I see he's in the carriage."

And she certainly did look lovely. So bright, so cheerful, so full of life and happiness. So the Lady Elizabeth got rolled into the carriage by her stout footman, and Alice and Edith followed, and off they went to Chiswick.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the old lady, when her husband emerged from the mass of muslin and lace which threatened to overwhelm him, "ha, ha, ha! they always do take one another's side ; it's no use talking to them. I never expect girls to see their own faults, but you never see one another's. Any news from the House, Montague?"

"None whatever ; the writ's out for Sittingdean ; we want a good practical man or two on our side if we could get them ; the young ones are all too full of Greek and Latin, and models of antiquity. What interest is there at Sittingdean?"

"Sir Frederick Marston owns a great part of the property round there ; and I think Thornhill has something to do with it. I should be glad to see him in Parliament ; it would give him something to do and to think about. He's a fine fellow, I hear, being spoilt by the world."

"He's a desperate gambler, though a man of considerable talent, and the most popular man in his county. Poor Mrs. Thornhill is seldom in town, and a bachelor's house is not the safest place for a man of his temperament. Do you know him?" said the ironmaster to Edith and Alice Daere.

"We often meet him : his brother saved Edward's life at school;" and Edith told the story: Alice was not very talkative.

On nearing Turnham Green the carriages came thickly, and they were soon in a line of well-dressed people, like themselves.

They already recognised some acquaintances. "There go the Capels ; those are the new horses."

"Where's your brother, Alice ?" said Lady Elizabeth.

"The drags are gone to Greenwich, and Edward is on one of them."

"I'm sorry for it. I hoped we should have seen him. Surely you're mistaken, Alice ; the drags are not gone. Here is one of them, and Mr. Thornhill driving," said Lady Elizabeth, as one of the best coaches of the day passed slowly by the side of the carriage, pulling up for a stoppage, however, immediately beyond.

"Talk of the devil," said Mr. Mastodon. "I wish he would start for Sittingdean, or we shall have some Radical or Chartist going down to talk nonsense to those unhappy electors about the rights of the people and universal suffrage. He is a gentleman, and one of the best fellows in England, if report speaks truly."

Alice began to think the old ironmaster wonderfully agreeable : more so than usual. She hardly knew why. Edith was not quite sure whether his eulogy was intended for the enemy of mankind, whom he had so lately apostrophised, as he had mentioned no name since. In clouds of dust, amidst the prancing and neighings of gaily caparisoned steeds, and in a whole volume of crinoline, kid gloves, parasols, bowings, scrapings, flirtations, heartlessness, and suffocation, Lady Elizabeth, her husband, and Edith and Alice Dacre, alighted from the carriage, and were passed into those gardens which, as a fashionable resort, three times a season, are amongst the things that have been. Did anyone ever see the flowers or the fruit at a Chiswick fête ? Certainly not. That is, nobody who is anybody. Now I like women, girls especially, who love flowers, and although prize camellias and highly-commended ericas were not altogether the vanity of Lady Elizabeth, she had quite good-nature enough to ask whether they would like to go to the tent.

"Oh, by all means, let us see the flowers first," said Edith Dacre, "we can look at the people afterwards." So they turned towards the tent. Seeing the flowers, however, was not by any means any easy matter ; for as every other person in the grounds had come to be seen or to see somebody else, the stoppages were continual, and the stream set the other way.

"Here comes Smith Ruthven," said Lady Elizabeth, as a

a good-natured looking man with gray eyes, light hair, and a very dégagé-looking pair of whiskers came towards them, raising his hat as he did so, and getting comfortably wedged in between the Speaker of the House of Commons on one side, and Bullock the banker's wife on the other. "Can I be of any assistance to you?" said he, good-humouredly; "you look as if you wanted to get to the flowers."

"These young ladies do, Mr. Ruthven; so if you and my husband will go with them, I'll stop and talk to—— oh! here's Mrs. Thornhill; why, it's an age since we've seen you."

"I have been so little in Town this season," said the mother of Tom Thornhill, who was a fair, pretty woman, exceedingly well preserved, with the most charming manner, and dressed *à merveille*. "My son, Lady Elizabeth Montagu Mastodon," and Tom was presented in due form.

"I knew your father, sir," said the old lady, "and I remember dining with your brother, who charmed me by his literary knowledge upon that occasion. I hope he's well."

"Thank you, I believe he is: he's gone to Greenwich to dinner. I wanted him to come here with my mother, but he was engaged."

"More pleasantly," said Mrs. Thornhill; "I and my friend Miss Stanhope were not sufficiently attractive to Charlie."

"You do him injustice, my dear mother," said Tom; "he's gone to take care of an old schoolfellow who, he thinks, stands in need of his help; a friend of yours, Lady Elizabeth, Edward Dacre."

"I'm glad to hear it, for if ever I saw a Telemachus who stood in need of a Mentor, it is that young gentleman," said her ladyship, fanning herself vigorously.

"Who is this lovely girl coming this way with Smith Ruthven," said Mrs. Thornhill, putting up a glass and appealing to Lady Elizabeth again.

"That, my dear madam, is Miss Edith Dacre, and that's her sister behind with my husband, they seem to have had a roughish passage through the crowd. Have you anyone standing for Sittingdean, Mr. Thornhill?"

"I've not heard of anyone; of course there are always reports. Have you anyone you want to recommend, Lady Elizabeth?"

"Nobody fitter than yourself, unless it's your brother, Mr. Thornhill; he looks practical, as if he thought more than he

talked. He has had more education than instruction, I imagine, from what I know of him. But here's Smith Ruthven ; he's looking for a seat."

"Then he'll look a long time in this crowd," said Mr. Mastodon, coming in for the fag end of the conversation. "I hope you have enjoyed the flowers, Miss Dacre." Smith Ruthven bowed and retreated.

"What I saw of them. It's not the way to enjoy them ; and I cannot quite understand the pleasure attaching to their production. Who's that, Mr. Thornhill ? There, the unhappy, tearful face looking this way."

"That's Mrs. Smith Ruthven, the author's wife, the man who has just left you. Charming writer he is too ; so fresh and vigorous."

"And he always leaves an impression of goodness ; he writes so feelingly, so honestly, so beautifully, so gracefully of women," added Alice.

"Does he ?" said Tom Thornhill. "I hardly——" and here he broke down, when Lady Elizabeth came to the rescue.

"Then it's a pity he doesn't stay at home and practice a little of those virtues. He treats his wife shamefully."

"We don't know how his wife treats him, my dear," said Mr. Mastodon ; "there are generally faults on both sides."

"She hasn't character enough to have any faults, excepting those that he has made for her. She was childish and affectionate, she has become sullen or indifferent. Like a child, she could have lived through anything but neglect." So spake the Lady Elizabeth. How right she was ! Anything but neglect. Women are made to be our companions, our helpmates ; and we pay a greater respect to their feelings when we contradict them, and quarrel with them, than when we turn our backs upon their show of resentment, and exhibit our superiority by carelessness and neglect. It was quite true ; Smith Ruthven was a successful writer ; his graceful morality was in everybody's mouth ; he was the spoilt pet of a certain society, where sentimentality stood for reputation ; at home, he was selfish and indifferent ; never seen in public with his wife ; and his infidelities were the theme of universal admiration or excuse.

The gardens were beginning to thin, and gentlemen were busy in looking for carriages. Tom Thornhill went in search of Lady Elizabeth's. That gentleman's acquaintance was very extensive, for, having a taste for almost everything, he was courted by all

whose interest or pleasure could be served by knowing him. His progress to the garden gate was frequently interrupted. Lady Hatherleigh must have him at her private theatricals, and was most anxious to put him forcibly down into the vacant seat at once by the side of Emma Hatherleigh, a very pretty girl without a shilling. He had to explain that his mother and Miss Stanhope were under his care in the drag. Captain Blackcock and Fitzroy Livingstone wanted him to fix a day for shooting the pigeon match with Akroyd of the Royals. Sir David Bruce wished for his opinion of a new Clumber, and little Mrs. Janet Mucklestane caught him just as he imagined himself free of the lot, and insisted upon a promise that he would go down to-morrow morning to look at a charger for her nephew, who wanted, like everybody else, a fourpenny loaf for twopence. At length he found Lady Elizabeth's servants, and then he went in search of his own, who had got the drag into a good place for starting. Having seen the Mastodon party into their carriage, and got seats for his mother and Miss Stanhope, a very excellent but eccentric maiden cousin, who lived as a companion with Mrs. Thornhill, he then had to catch the men who were going back with him; and having accomplished this feat with some delay and difficulty, he at length got on to the box, and went on his way back to London.

Alice and Edith Dacre were delighted with their day's amusement. They were still young enough, and fresh enough, to feel real pleasure at so simple an enjoyment; so they both recounted at dinner the impressions that had been made upon them by their new acquaintances, and declared Lady Elizabeth to be the most charming person alive.

From that day the intimacy between the Thornhills and the Dacres appeared to increase. There was something so genial and so unaffected in Tom Thornhill's manner, so accomplished and so thoroughly gentlemanlike in all he did and said, that he became an equal favourite with Mr. and Mrs. Dacre. Charlie was less confident, less assured in manner than his brother, especially with ladies. He was not so fond of them, and they resented his neglect by calling him a bear. A few knew him better, and encouraged him; and the more they knew him the more they liked him and trusted him. He did nearly the same things as his brother; but he arrived at those results by a different process—Tom from impulse; Charlie with a certain consistency, as from principle. Their affection for each other

never varied; and their intimacy with the Dacres was an additional bond of union.

As Tom Thornhill is not the hero of this story, it will not do to give him too prominent a part; he must at least share his pre-eminence with Charlie. As far as he is concerned at present we have before us one of the most extravagant young ones that had been out for some time. He not only lighted the candle at both ends, but cut it in two in the middle to get more light out of it still. He had a good fortune, notwithstanding poor Geoffrey Thornhill's extravagance; for a long minority had helped to remedy some evils. A few thousands a year are something when a man is satisfied with indulging in hunting at Melton, or buying pictures, or keeping race-horses, or killing two thousand pheasants a season; but they are nothing when he wants to do each of these things, and adds to it a drag, a London season, and an attachment to gambling in every shape or kind whatever. The last item is a sufficiency. Thornhill was not a gamester, but a gambler. Success excited him, loss perfectly maddened him; and they who knew him best prognosticated a short life, and anything but a merry one. United with these faults was a chivalrous generosity, a warm and affectionate heart, great readiness, and some elegant learning, and a simplicity of manner and natural good humour which enchanted everyone. His mother doted upon the very ground he walked on. His county held even the name in veneration; for two generations of Thornhills had established its merits as country gentlemen, the staunchest preservers of foxes in England: and his brother, who was freer from weaknesses than most people, regarded his very vices with a more tolerant eye than he regarded most people's virtues. Unfortunately, he had a difficulty in saying "no" to himself, a still greater one in saying it to others, which made him err from good-nature against his better judgment. He was very handsome and tall in person, and had the appearance of a finished gentleman, without coxcombry. Is it wonderful that a few weeks of more than ordinary attention, on his part, made a deep impression on Alice, which subsequent events only served to confirm?

The season was drawing towards its close. The ministers were, of necessity, still in Town. But the West End began to look thinner, and Goodwood was approaching. The shrubs and trees in the squares and parks looked drier and dustier than ever. Lancaster and Purday had their hands full. Already a keeper

or two had been met, hurrying along Pall Mall towards the railway terminus, leading sundry setters, pointers, and retrievers. The whitebait had grown larger, perceptibly, and nothing remained but a *déjeuner* or two at Twickenham or elsewhere, to which everyone was invited, always the herald of departing joys. But one question was ever put to the afternoon lounge, "Where are you going?" and the answer, instead of being to Mrs. Furbelow's, or the Marchioness of Micklegelt, was invariably, "To Homburg," or "Scotland," "the Tyrol," or "the Italian Lakes;" morning calls, excepting as a P.P.C., were at an end; and whole strings of horses were leaving the jobmasters' yards daily. Everything looked like going: the difficulty was to say where. The eligibles had a difficulty in choosing; the detrimentials were not so much puzzled. St. George's, Hanover Square, was open for a particular service daily; not unfrequently by special licence, at 4 P.M.; and two or three bishops were seriously affected by the severe demands upon their time. The band was nearly over in Kensington Gardens; and the metropolitan Elysium of nursery-maids and Life Guardsmen was almost again at their service. The theatres and the opera had long commenced benefit nights, and the last turn-out of the teams had already been fixed.

Wilson Graves was an unmitigated scamp, but a better whip than the generality of his compeers. He neither started his coach by his leaders, nor screwed them when he had set them going. He had never been known to carry away his bars by a little accident against the gate-post at Goodwood, nor to commit any of those solecisms which too frequently occur in modern days. It is not wonderful, then, that one night late in July he should have returned Charlie safe to Grosvenor Place, after the last of a series of dinners, varying from the "Trafalgar," round the suburbs of London, to the "Black Dog" at Bedfont. "Good night, Charlie," said half a dozen voices, as he jumped down, "see you to-morrow?" "Probably," said he; "good night; that near-side leader would make a hunter." He stood at the door, watching the retreating team, as it went up towards the corner, and smoking the last inch of a very good cigar which he eventually threw into the gutter. He then knocked at the door of a small but very pretty house, whose balcony, adorned with flowers, brought the sweets of the country into London, and spoke of woman's care.

"Is my mother gone up-stairs yet, Gregson?" said Charlie to the servant.

"No, sir ; Mrs. Thornhill is not come home yet. She is gone to the opera."

"Alone ?"

"No, sir ; Miss Stanhope went with her. She will be home soon, sir ; Mrs. Thornhill is always early on Saturday night. It's only half-past ten yet, sir."

"Then bring me a light ; I'll stroll up and down here till the carriage comes."

Charlie lit his cigar, and commenced his walk. But a man cannot walk, and smoke up and down a space of a couple of hundred yards without thinking : so he began to think. His meditations were not satisfactory. He asked himself who he was ? Mr. Thornhill's brother. What he was ? An idler in a false position. What had he ? Great expectations, which might be disappointed ; and many liabilities, which honest men discharge. What could he do ? Literally nothing ; yes—stop : ride well over a country, shoot partridges and rabbits to perfection, pheasants in cover not so well ; drive—certainly ; play cricket and tennis, billiards moderately ; and—well, it must be admitted, fight a little better than common. What did he know ? One language—his own, very imperfectly, but enough to make himself understood ; very little Latin, very little French, less Greek ; multiplication, but was doubtful about long division and vulgar fractions ; the situation of a few places in England, and the capitals of France, Austria, Turkey, and Russia ; the habits of some birds and animals, especially the dog and the fox : no history beyond the first seven kings of Rome and William Rufus ; an ordinary quadrille, but not the complications of the dance called the "Lancers." How did he live ? On his mother, his brother, and his friends, who are numerous enough for anything. Had he any good in him ? Yes ; and this question he answered hesitatingly ; his love for Edith Dacre. It stood, for the present, in the place of higher motives, as it frequently does, not as their substitute, but as their precursor ; and when he had arrived at this point, and his calculations were becoming less methodical, his mother's carriage drew up at the door.

"Oh, Charlie ! are you come home ? I am so glad to see you," said Mrs. Thornhill, as she stepped out of the carriage, followed by Mary Stanhope, a young lady of fifty, commonly known as Aunt Mary by the brothers, but really a first cousin of their mother.

"Come in here, Charlie, I want to talk to you; oh! never mind your cigar; Aunt Mary's used to it, and nobody will find it out in the morning."

"Was the opera good, Aunt Mary?" said Charlie, who continued to smoke.

"Very; Grisi sang as well as I ever heard her, and they have a charming bass—what's the man's name?—a German," replied Miss Stanhope, who, though an eccentricity of the first water, had a highly cultivated taste, and was fully competent to give an opinion on most things.

"Staudigl?" suggested Charlie.

"Yes; I never heard him before. What should such a dunce as you know about Staudigl?" said Aunt Mary.

"Cressingham heard him at the Grand Duchess's at Mannheim, some time ago, and said he had the finest voice he ever heard. My friends cultivate the arts for me—it saves trouble."

"Where's Tom to-night?" said Mrs. Thornhill; "is he coming home?"

"He's dining at the Mastodons: he said he should go back to the Albany to sleep to-night, as he had to leave town on Monday."

"Do you see much of Tom, now, Charlie?" said the widow of Geoffrey Thornhill, with a sigh, as she thought of a time gone by.

"More than ever; every day."

"Where; at the Dacres?"

"Yes; not unfrequently: I generally ride with him at five; I am exercising his black hack for him; besides, we often dine together at the club."

"That Miss Dacre was at the opera," said the widow, not to be shaken off. "What a pretty girl she is: but there's no money."

"I should think they'll marry without that; Miss Dacre is very handsome."

"I don't think it is Miss Dacre that I mean: she's handsome, with a great deal of intellect in her face, and a finer girl altogether; I mean the other one."

"That's Edith," said Charlie; "some people think her the prettier of the two."

"So she is: and Tom seems to think so among them, from what I heard to night."

"I fancy not, mother." Here Charlie emitted such a volume of smoke that Mrs. Thornhill began to cough.

"I beg your pardon ; I am sure the smoke is too much for you." Here Charlie was making for the door, protesting that he would finish his cigar outside.

"You'd both be better in bed, if you're only going to beat about the bush in that way." said Aunt Mary.

"Well, then, Charlie, tell me, is there anything between that pretty Edith Dacre and your brother, likely to lead to an engagement ? Everybody talks about it, and I'm told he's always at the house."

"Nothing whatever, my dear mother ; so make your mind easy on that score."

"Easy ! Ah, Charlie, if you knew my anxieties, you wouldn't be surprised at my wishing to see Tom married. And as to Edith Dacre, I could love her like a child of my own."

Heaven knows that Mrs. Thornhill could not have made use of a stronger expression. The mother of the Gracchi was not prouder of her sons, and scarcely loved them as well.

Mary Stanhope was tired of the conversation, and Charlie was not anxious to prolong it ; he had quite love enough of his own on his shoulders, without interesting himself about other people.

CHAPTER XX.

IN QUEST OF A DOG.

"One that I brought up off a puppy ; one that I saved from drowning, when three or four of his blind brothers and sisters went to it."—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act IV, sc. 3.

On the Monday after this conversation, about eleven o'clock A.M., might be seen to enter Stanhope Gate a fine broad-shouldered young man, sitting on a magnificent black hack, with that charming *négligé* which bespeaks the most perfect command of the animal. His shoulders were well back and squared, his elbows close to his side, his reins held at a tolerable length, one in each hand, of both curb and snaffle, giving sufficient play to the horse's mouth without any loss of control. The feet were well home in the stirrups, and the legs, easily bent at the knee, fell in a straight line from that to the instep, shewing strength

and power, as well as grace in every movement. His body from the hips swayed easily with the motions of the horse, which, proud of his burden, turned from side to side, occasionally breaking from his stately walk, and exhibiting a valuable capability of bending his knee which would have been appreciated by every lover of a good mover. Very few men looked better on horseback than Charlie Thornhill; and though not strictly a handsome man, and certainly not to be compared with his brother, it was impossible to have passed him without admiration, expressed or felt.

He was little aware as he rode along, absorbed in the momentary hilarity which such consciousness of command invariably inspires, how many persons were interesting themselves for him. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston had already that very morning canvassed his chances of a commission in the cavalry, for which he was not too old, or a clerkship in the treasury, for which he was not supposed to be eminently qualified. The days of examination had begun; and though not arrived at the pitch of absurdity to which they have since reached, they would certainly have found out Charlie's weak points. The Dacres had taken a great fancy to him, and he had renewed his old friendship with Teddy, the boy whose life he had saved: it was not to be forgotten. At the same time, as a mother, Mrs. Dacre could not be blamed for wondering whether she had taken quite a prudent step in extending her autumn invitation to a younger son of great but doubtful expectations. She had no such misgivings about Tom: though I doubt whether she liked him the better of the two. His uncle, Henry Thornhill, had many a heartache over the prospects of the boy (for he was still very like one in many respects), yet he ought to have been able to assure them with tolerable certainty—at least, so said the world; and it never lies. And Lord Carlingford wondered much whether Charlie would be able to ride 12st. 7lb. in the Aristocratic, for which he had entered a very good and resolute horse, which could race as well as fence, if one could but steer him straight. There were not many gentlemen capable of the performance.

His broad shoulders were espied in the distance by an early lounger like himself; so cantering after him, as he passed through the Park gate by the Duke's, De Beauvoir joined him.

"Confound him," thought Charlie, "here's Edith Dacre's handsome admirer;" he had scarcely seen him to indulge in much conversation since the Richmond affair.

De Beauvoir, for his part, did not dream of a rival, having much too good an opinion of himself : so he touched our hero on the arm, and asked where he was going.

"To Tattersall's," said Charlie.

"So am I, to look at a cover hack for next season," said De Beauvoir.

"And I to sell ; I shall ask Tattersall for stalls for the two I bought not long ago—I believe they're very good, and can carry a stone or two over my weight. I shall scarcely have time to hunt next season."

"That's not bad," said the dandy, descending from his horse and leaving him in the hands of a red-coated retainer at the Corner. "'Gad, Thornhill, that's very nearly my own case : what with putting on one's breeches, and—augh ! one's boots, and—and—galloping to cover, and jogging home again, 'pon my honour it does take up a deal of time.

Lord Carlingford joined them, as Charlie Thornhill left his horse in the hands of a man whose face he did not remember to have seen there before. He was a shrewd-looking knave, in a worn-out hunting coat, and miserably clad in other respects ; but he saluted Charlie with that ready assurance so indicative of the Emerald Isle, that the "noble captain" found himself with one foot on the pavement, and the fellow holding his horse with one hand, and dusting his boots with an old rag with the other, before he knew where he was. At that moment Lord Carlingford called him by name ; the manner so assured a minute before suddenly changed. The obsequious hands trembled, the cunning eyes opened and fixed, and the face became pale and irresolute even to the lips.

"Mind the horse, you fool," said Charlie, "what's the matter ? you'll let him go ; nere send somebody else, Jack ; this fellow's afraid of him, I do believe." Saying which he turned with De Beauvoir and Lord Carlingford down the yard.

Half an hour sufficed to finish the business on which he went. He looked over a horse or two for Lord Carlingford, and gave a candid opinion of the capabilities of De Beauvoir's choice of a hack, which did not please that gentleman. He soon arranged for the sale of his own two horses for the following Monday, and was returning to upper air, when he was accosted by one of Mr. Tattersall's men.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I think you lost a very valuable bull-terrier, as you set great store by, some time ago ?"

"I did ; a very valuable one, and did not offer a reward, as I have already paid a good deal of money in that way, only to lose her again. However, I should like to have her again, and this time I think I can take care of her."

"I don't know about that, sir ; there's a gent here as 'as got the promise of a pointer dog for the season after next, and I know of two to have him before that time if things is on the square."

"You seem to be up in the dog business, Tom," said Charlie.

"Well, we see a good many curious characters about here ; there was one here last week as none on us know'd, was askin' as if we know'd anythink about your dawg : I see the man about this morning. They're a rum lot they are, but I think the dog might be got at, sir."

"Was the man an Irishman ?"

"Well, he didn't talk altogether like one," said Tom, whose ear was pretty well accustomed to the brogue : "but he'd got a man along with him as was a regular Irishman, I should say."

"Come to the top of the yard with me without saying anything ;" and up the yard they went. Having looked stealthily down Grosvenor Place first, he then looked towards Piccadilly, and true enough the man leading the black hack proved to be the identical person in question, and in deep confabulation with him was what Tom was pleased to call "the other cove." Dismissing the helper, Charlie put his hand into his waistcoat pocket, and having rewarded his temporary servant, was about to put his foot in the stirrup, determined upon making further inquiry, when he was accosted by the tall, dark, black-whiskered confederate. After beating a little about the bush, the man freely admitted that he knew where the bull-terrier was. He also stated that it would cost money to get it back : the least he could say would be three pounds.

"Could he guarantee it for that ; and how ?"

"Yes, he thought he could ; but the how was the difficulty. Would the gentleman meet him that evening, and go with him to identify the dog, and pay down the money if it was all right ?"

Charlie Thornhill hesitated. "Could not the dog be brought to him ?"

"No, no ; his pal had been done too often in that way. Would he meet him that evening at nine o'clock ?"

"Where ?"

"Did the gentleman know the sign of the 'Lively Fleas,' in Shoreditch?"

"Not he; he didn't know Shoreditch itself. However, there was no difficulty about that." So the black-whiskered individual, who seemed to affect something of the open and generous, and was not altogether so bad as the general run of these ruffians, gave a very lucid explanation of where the "Lively Fleas" was to be found: he only stipulated that the gentleman was to be alone, and trust to him. He would take him where he could see his dog, and as he believed, have him back on posting the money. With this Charlie was obliged to be content, and rode off, wondering what sort of place Shoreditch was at 9 o'clock P.M.

Having lunched with his mother and made a few calls, not forgetting the Dacres, who were about to leave town, and the Marstons, to whom he imparted his intention of giving up Melton for this winter, and going only for the first week's shooting to Gilsland instead of to Thornhills, he dined at the Club, and prepared for his evening's excursion. The arrangement of his toilet was no easy matter. No hat, coat, or general vagabondism could be found sufficient to disguise his appearance, and in utter despair he gave up the attempt. His servant was summoned, and instructed to seek a particular cabman from the top of St. James's Street. Fortunately he was to be found.

"Do you know an inn or public called the 'Lively Fleas,' in Shoreditch?"

At first the cabman seemed inclined to deny "the soft impeachment." He shook his head, rolled it from side to side, and leered at Charlie with a very suspicious grin. At last he said, "Well, sir, I can't justly say as I don't."

"Which means that you do. Now, drive me there: and make it as soon after nine as you can."

At first the cab went reluctantly. It was loth to quit the fashionable quarter of the town; but as the streets became thinner and thinner, and the conviction forced itself upon cabby that his fare was in earnest, he quickened his pace. The City, Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill, Cheapside, all looked gloomy, and were beginning to be deserted. Shoreditch was emptied of all but miserable women and a few labouring men. Before reaching the "Lively Fleas" Charlie thought it desirable to hold converse with his old acquaintance the cabman. He was

a gay, lively fellow, summer and winter in jack-boots, and always with a flower in his button-hole.

"I am going after a dog," said Charlie. "I don't know the company, and am inclined to think it's not over respectable. I must go alone with the man who meets me. You know my errand. Wait for me as near the public-house as you can. If I don't return in a reasonable time you'll know what to do. Are there any police about here?"

"Yes, sir, there are police, if they are werry much wanted—for a missing body or so, you know; and I think I knows where to hit upon a bobby, if needs be. But they ain't noways so handy as in Belgrave Square and your parts, sir; I suppose the coves about here is so werry respectable there ain't no call for 'em. But I'm glad you told me, cos I'm blowed if there ain't some rum kens lower down. Here, sir, you take this," said the charioteer, giving him a railway whistle; "they don't like the sound o' that: and this here too," added he, presenting Charlie with a short life-preserver; "they don't like the feel o' that. There's the 'Lively Fleas,' sir, as far as ever you can see. So if you like to get out and walk, I'll follow at a distance, and wait till I sees you agen, or don't hear nothin' of yer."

After this very intelligible arrangement Charlie proceeded on foot, and at about one hundred yards from the "Lively Fleas" he was joined by his hirsute companion. "Follow me," said the man, as he turned short to the right, nearly falling over a child in the kennel, whom he cursed, and proceeded at a brisk pace through alleys redolent of gin, tobacco smoke, and pestilential fever. Charlie followed, mentally comparing his own chance with the stranger in a struggle for life and death, and almost thinking that he had run his head into the noose for inadequate remuneration. But he was a cool, determined fellow, and marked well every house and turning as they passed them. At length they reached a low Elizabethan house, built of wood, with overhanging windows. Here the guide stopped, and pushing open a low door, they found themselves in a passage as dark as Erebus.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN EVENING IN SHOREDITCH.

"In counsel it is good to see dangers : and in execution not to see them, except they be very great."—*Bacon's Essays*.

THERE is no doubt that Charlie was in a fix. Dark as it was, he saw it in that light ; and though bold as a lion, he was by no means as formidable in this den of wild beasts, whither he had been led partly by an anxious wish to recover a very great favourite, and quite as much by a spirit of adventure, which always had charms for him, even as a boy.

I always notice that whenever any great rascality has to be committed, or any particularly criminal mystery has to be solved, the chief actor invariably whistles. I do not think it makes less noise than any other mode of signalling a brother rascal, and it certainly produces an unnecessary action on the nervous system of the victim. There may be something in the old Latin grammar adaptation of Sallust, "*Quod factu fædum est, idem turpe est dictu ;*" and whistling may get over an ethical difficulty. For my own part I see no good in it at all. It only tends to waken suspicion and create alarm ; and I would strongly advise all rogues to "keep their own breath to cool their own porridge."

Perhaps the interesting ruffian, who was remarkable for nothing but his handsome, though evil countenance, a certain air of command, and a manifest self-esteem well calculated to impose upon the lower orders of felons, who had brought our hero into this dilemma, was of the same opinion ; for having closed the door, and finding himself involved in total darkness, he began to shout with a very audible voice, and no measured language, a demand for a light. "Now then, old Mother Skinflint, how long are we to be kept without a glim ? What's become of the lamp ?" This demand produced an effect. A door in the wall, on the left, half way down the passage, opened, and disclosed a head more hideous than anything that Charlie had as yet seen. A scarlet kerchief surmounted a dark brown wig, at this time awry, and settling gradually over one of two eyes as bright and black and piercing as the other was bleared

and innocent of vision. The face was sharp and hook-nosed, and the mouth gave visible tokens of the inroads of time. The lamp was held above her head, and as Charlie moved towards the door he had time to note these circumstances of personal appearance. Following his conductor, who steered by the light ahead, he found himself at once in a large but dirty kitchen, where a girl, evidently of gipsy blood, was frying eggs in a large frying-pan, whilst an unconcerned spectator, with a bridle in one hand and a heavy jockey-whip in the other, sat smoking his pipe in the chimney corner. The windows were strongly barred, and an old flint and steel gun, hanging at the roof, seemed the only ostensible means of defence. Opposite the fire, although a warm night in July, lay a ferocious looking mastiff, active, sullen, and brindled. He showed his teeth at the new arrival, but resumed his couchant attitude at a sign from the conductor of the party.

Charlie began to be assured, for though several sentences passed between the woman and the guide in a tongue quite incomprehensible to him, still there seemed to be no unfriendly feeling towards the new comer. The girl, indeed, by a natural instinct, made way for him at the fire, though so warm, and he, by an equally natural instinct, smiled and thanked her as he declined the offered place. "If you'll let me," said he, "I'll light my cigar." Saying which, he took his case from his pocket, selected one with considerable care, and proceeded to smoke whilst waiting for further orders from his mysterious conductor.

"Now, if you please," at last said that functionary. "If you'll follow me I'll see what can be done. I suppose that's not the dog?" pointing to the one at the fire. Charlie could not help remarking that the man seldom made a mistake in speaking; and though his manner was utterly without respect for Charlie's condition, and he assumed at least an equality with him throughout, he was free from that coarseness of expression or tone which is almost invariable, in one way or the other, with a man of that class. To Charlie, too, he had made use of no slang expression; his conversation with the old woman was evidently a language, and not thieves' *patter*; and he rightly conjectured that he was in a gipsy's London crib. This reassured him again; for he reflected that if they were the least scrupulous, they had some redeeming qualities of generosity and courage. His was a race-course experience of that remark-

able people. He saw the holiday side of them; and he forgot that if they had a negative feeling of good-will to himself, they were actuated by a positive feeling of regard for dogs and money, and would go any length to serve their purpose when safe from detection.

At the further end of the kitchen, and away from the front of the house, as it appeared, was another door. Through this they disappeared, and descending four steps, they made their way, by help of a reflector in the wall, along a second passage of about five-and-twenty feet long to a room apparently detached from the kitchen. The door opened with an ordinary latch. By the very recent smell of tobacco smoke it had been lately occupied, and a rough arm chair, one of the only pieces of furniture in the room, retained the impression of a late sitter. There was a rough round table retaining the marks of pewter pots in full force, and a torn copy of "Bell's Life," some weeks old, had found its way into this den of thieves. The room itself was of good size, some twenty-five feet by twenty. Over a battered-looking chimney piece, now unused as a grate, there was a likeness of the celebrated buggy horse "Coventry, the property of Lord Ongley;" and round the room were some villainously-coloured engravings of celebrated pugilists. A set of gloves in one corner bespoke the occupation of leisure hours, and some strong staples let into the wall here and there looked like "baiting." In fact it was a convenient place for the commission of iniquities, or for the promotion of sports peculiar to certain classes, and might be the scene of a murder or Sabbath-day's recreation for the neighbours, as the case might be. Charlie was allowed full leisure for the examination of the chamber, and for reflections upon his folly in coming to it. He lifted up a dim light, afforded by a bad rushlight in a sconce, and examined the likenesses of Molyneux, Dutch Sam, Sambo Sutton, White-headed Bob, and the aforesaid Coventry. The chair was too dirty to sit down in, and the literary remains too filthy to read. A chorus of dogs, manifestly close at hand, kept breaking upon his ear, and the occasional clanking of a chain, and a rate, accompanied by a deep curse, reminded him of his errand. Surely that was his old favourite Rose. He went to a barred shutter and listened. Somebody was quieting her, and loosing the chain from a staple in the kennel or wall to which she was fastened. In another minute he heard a smothered conversation: it sounded like a dispute. Then he heard steps of heavy boots,

not as if intended for concealment, and immediately after a heavy door, which was on the opposite side of the room from that by which Charlie had entered, opened slowly, and a man made his appearance, leaving the door partially open, however, as though for communication, or more comers. As he advanced into the room, Charlie saw a face which seemed not entirely unknown to him. It had gipsy blood stamped on it, with the peculiar fire of the eyes of that people. But it had none of their beauty, for the other natural lineaments of the face were disfigured, swollen, and flattened by the exercise of the calling to which he manifestly belonged—that of a fighter. He was a hard set man of about thirty-five, and had lost some of his activity and wire of youth. In his best days, science being equal, he would not have been a match for Charlie. He had neither his reach nor size across the chest, his length of limb, nor fine clean hips, indicative of activity. The measurement Charlie took of him was satisfactory, as the two men eyed one another—tolerably good specimens of their class, but the gentleman, even in mere *physique*, bearing the bell.

After a dogged silence of about a minute, the man addressed him.

“You’re come about a dog?”

“I am,” said Charlie Thornhill.

“What sort of you want?”

“A white bull bitch, very handsome, and highly bred—almost thorough-bred, but with a grey-hound mouth. She answers to the name of Rose.

“I dessay she do. Leastways, I haven’t tried her. We don’t know anything about names here. You call her what you please. We’ve got a very nice ’un.”

“Can I see her?” said Charlie, re-lighting his cigar, which he had allowed to go out.

“Oh! yes, certainly; she’s a very nice ’un, mind ye; she’s a gentleman’s dawg all over;” which was equivalent to admitting that she belonged to no one in Shoreditch, at all events. “Here, Bill,” said he, “bring in the little bitch, you know, as we got for the sporting sugar-baker at Whitechapel.

Bill was not long in responding. A chain was heard, and in rushed Rose, dragging Bill after her, and making her way at once to Charlie Thornhill with every demonstration of satisfaction. “Rose, Rose; down Rose; be quiet, good bitch: down,” said he. And she stood looking up at her master with every limb like alabaster.

"Well! I suppose you're convinced she's my dog?" said Charlie.

"We never asks any questions about whose dog she is, when she comes into our hands. We supposes as you wants to buy a dog like this 'un here," said the man, quietly leading her away and fastening her by a chain to a staple in the wall at the other end of the room. "We'd as lief sell her to you as to any one else."

This was putting a virtuous aspect on a nefarious transaction: clothing poverty in fine linen with a vengeance. However, that was their look out, and Charlie saw nothing very much to object to in this flimsy veil of honesty. The sight of the dog, too, had sharpened his appetite for his property, so he replied very simply—

"Then I should like to buy the bitch. I'm giving to understand that three pounds——"

"Three pounds? Lor! there's hundreds as 'ud give twenty. You can't buy a hanimal like this here for twice three pounds, not if she wur stole."

Charlie was losing patience. "D——n your impudence! Why, she *was* stolen. She belongs to me, I tell you. What do you suppose I came here for: to buy my own property again at its full value?"

"I don't know anything about that," said the man, sulkily, "but I ain't a going to part with that dog under twice three pounds; so if you ain't a mind to give more, there's an end of the deal."

During the whole of this time Rose kept on whining significantly, standing at the full length of her chain, and straining her eyes and limbs in the direction of Charlie. He was becoming more determined than ever to repossess himself of his property, and the impudence of the robbery added fuel to the flame.

"Then you don't mean to give me back my dog?"

"I don't mean to sell this here bitch for less than six pounds."

"There are the three sovereigns," and Charlie placed them in the palm of his hand, where they glittered temptingly in the surrounding gloom.

"They're no use: put 'm up again; why the collar's pretty nigh worth the money," and he pointed to a handsomely-worked steel collar, which had either never been removed, or was now replaced.

"Why! you infernal scoundrel, there's my own name on it! I insist upon having the dog," saying which, with a firmly-closed lip, and a heavy determined step, Charlie moved towards the dog.

But the gipsy anticipated his movement, and was there before him.

"Stand on one side." The man put himself into a posture of defence, and struck rapidly out; but Charlie stopped the blow with his left arm, and closed with him at once. Up to that moment Rose had been quiet enough: with the instinct peculiar to all the bull-dog kind, she no sooner heard the shuffling of feet, than her whole nature changed. She sprang violently to the length of her chain; she strained every muscle in her endeavours to free herself; her mouth foamed, her prominent eyes became bloodshot, and her short bark changed into a prolonged and fearful yell. The chain almost yielded to her efforts, as she fell at each bound in her frantic struggles back upon the floor. Charlie in the meantime had seized the neck-cloth of his antagonist with his left hand, and his left wrist with his right. The struggle would not have been long, had they been left to themselves; already he was dragging him towards the dog, who would soon have declared for her master, when he saw the gipsy's disengaged hand descend rapidly into his shooting-coat pocket, and reappear with a glistening knife. Nothing remained to be done but to release his throat and get possession of the other hand. In a moment he had done so; but in that moment the man sent forth a shout for help, to which the hurry of steps told of a response. At the same instant, changing his right hand from the wrist to the throat, and placing his leg rapidly behind him, Charlie threw him on the back of his head within reach of Rose. The dog seized him by the throat, whilst the frantic efforts of the gipsy were unavailing to free himself from the powerful gripe of our hero. Charlie dared not let go; the life of his dog would have been the forfeit. Easing himself, therefore, he placed his knee upon the fallen man's chest, bent upon forcing the weapon from him, when with a loud bang the door flew open, and he was seized by the collar from behind. Matters looked serious; he remembered his whistle, and his life-preserver. Relaxing his hold of the throat, and resisting the violent efforts that were being made to disengage him from behind, he dragged them from a side pocket of the old paletôt with which he had endeavoured to

conceal his respectability. One shrill blast, which startled both his assailants for a second, and one gentle blow on the arm above the wrist, which dropped the armed limb as though it had been broken, released him from his prostrate foe. He turned rapidly in his kneeling posture upon the ruffian who held him from behind, and at the same moment his conductor appeared upon the stage from the other door. "Hold hard," said he in a voice of authority, which so paralyzed the powerful fellow who still grappled with Charlie, that he was enabled to rise. Close on his footsteps followed the Léonarde of the establishment, and as the only truly dangerous member was still under the fangs of the dog, the affray was almost terminated. Fear kept the prisoner quiet. The conductor approached the dog and was met with a low growl.

"Call off the dog, in God's name."

"That's not so easy to do ; besides which, your comrade has another hand at liberty, and a drawn knife by his side ; one arm is disabled ; if he moves the other," said Charlie, "I can't be answerable for the consequences. The quieter he lies the better for him." With that he picked up the knife. The old woman went to the fallen man. "What, Giles, not blood enough yet !" Giles held his tongue, almost his breath. Rose showed no inclination to let go.

"Call off the dog, if you can do so."

"Lie still, Giles," said the black-haired conductor, who had a curious expression of sadness stealing over his handsome features. And Charlie went to Rose, and loosed the chain. With a few words he soothed the dog, which after a low growl or two retired to his heels, and the fallen man got on his legs.

"There, Giles, take your three sovereigns, and let him have his dog ; give him the three sovereigns. See him safe through the kitchen, mother. I owe him a life and I pay it. Take your dog, and be gone. Do you know your way ?"

"Am I safe?" said Charlie, who began to realize the dangers of his exploit, as he handed over the three sovereigns.

"Yes ; and if you're stopped before you get into the main street the sign is 'Cast off.' You're a gentleman—promise on your word of honour not to betray us. Your dog is safe, for us, for the future."

"I do promise ;" and having leisurely brushed his hat with his sleeve, and shaken the dust from his clothes, he followed

the old woman, with Rose at his heels, from the scene of his recent struggle.

It has taken a long time in telling, but the encounter scarcely lasted as many seconds as there are lines in the recital.

Once outside the felons' haunt, he traversed the alleys with rapid strides, doubtful whether, when he regained the street, he should find his cab. He was not long in uncertainty ; he was still some hundred yards from the "Lively Fleas," which seemed to be driving a roaring trade, when he met his cab, coming slowly towards him. The man recognised him in an instant ; he jumped in without a word, followed by the dog, and about five-and-forty minutes or something more saw him at the top of Grosvenor Place. It was now eleven o'clock, and having paid his charioteer handsomely and returned him his property, he strolled quietly down to his mother's door.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE END OF THE SEASON.

"Fire that is closest kept, burns most of all."
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

"WHERE are you going, Charlie ? I hear you have given orders for packing up ; is it to Scotland ?" said Mrs. Thornhill, on the morning following Charlie's desperate adventure. Circumstances made him look grave ; and Mary Stanhope was fond of thinking that he did not take sufficient care of himself. They were two devoted women ; and the large black eyes and sallow skin of Aunt Mary concealed a whole ocean of love for the brothers, which was always overflowing in one way or another, sometimes in praise, as often in censure.

"No, my dear mother ; but if you will have me for a month at Thornhills, I should like to go down. I've nothing between that and the Rhine, until September," said her son. "I am going to Bognor for the Goodwood week ; Tom's gone."

"And where do you go in September ? I thought the shooting at Thornhills was good enough to tempt anyone."

"To the Dacres : Tom won't be at home ; he never begins

till nearly the middle of the month, and then the house will be full."

"I thought you liked a full house."

"So he does, Emily," said Aunt Mary, "but he's going to look after Tom's interests. There are two sisters you know, Charlie, and I prefer the eldest myself; so take care of yourself. When do the Dacres leave town?"

"To-morrow. You're curious, Aunt Mary."

"Sign of an inquiring mind, Charlie: you've no curiosity, and that's why you are so idle."

"I never trouble myself about other people's business."

"Thank you, Charlie—I do; and it's very fortunate for you and your dear mother that I have the taste for it; I don't know what would become of you all. So now tell me, where are the Dacres going? to Gilsland?"

"No, to some people near Chichester for Goodwood, called the Robinson Browns."

"Do you know who the Robinson Browns are, Charlie?"

"No, thank goodness; but probably you do, Aunt Mary."

"Yes, I do know something about them; I wonder a man like Mr. Dacre should take his wife and daughters there. Robinson Brown indeed! What a name it is."

"It's a very good name in its way. He's not a Stanhope; but he has large houses, fine horses, magnificent plate, loads of ready money, and a large establishment," said Charlie, with a sinister smile.

"And large daughters and plenty of them," added Mary Stanhope, with considerable energy, "whom Mrs. Robinson Brown wishes to marry to the best men in town. Do you call that reputable, Charlie?"

"Well! it's the way of the world."

"I hope your wife won't do so, whenever you have one. Your mother, poor thing, is saved from the temptation. I shouldn't have been much use to her here." And, true enough, she would not. Your matchmaker wants a very peculiar combination of qualities—a mind capable of very well-disguised dissimulation, and guided by a principle of lying upon occasion, which would have gladdened the heart of the great Lord Shaftesbury; a disinterestedness which covets all things, and an innocent simplicity of character all but omniscient; Argus-like blindness; great self-restraint; a taste for everything, especially manly pursuits and classical erudition, combined with an incapacity for physical

exertion most opportune ; an infallible knowledge of an elder son, or an eligible *parti* ; a close acquaintance with the Peerage and Baronetage, and Burke's Landed Gentry ; and a capability for absorbing, or radiating, warmth as occasion demands ; great affection—for herself and her young ; much courage—in repelling the advances of a detrimental ; and steadiness in the pursuit of her game, which is supposed only to belong to the bloodhound on the track of the fugitive slave. If to all these you add great knowledge of gastronomy, discernment of affinities and combination, delicacy of touch, so as not to alarm the timid, tenacity of purpose, so as not to let go the captive, and a veil of fascination over the whole character, which reminds of the last scene of a pantomime, or a poached egg in pea-soup, and you have our friend Mrs. Robinson Brown as clearly as if Frank Grant himself had drawn the picture.

Beyond this there was no harm in Mrs. Robinson Brown and her daughters. Mary Stanhope was a prejudiced old woman. She was not unlike one half of her own acquaintance. She had the misfortune to be of the *aucune famille*, and to have the revenues of a duchess, or she might have pursued her schemes without remark. Besides her daughters, however, whom she destined to get off, she had a son who had made up his mind to be guided by nothing but taste in the choice of a wife. This young gentleman had hit upon Edith Dacre, as combining all advantages but one, that of money, and which deficiency he proposed himself to supply. Hence the pressing invitation to the Dacres to join their Goodwood party ; and as they were really people who went everywhere, and knew everybody, there seemed no difficulty in accepting.

Anybody at all versed in old-maidenism will see with half an eye that Mary Stanhope—and I call her so, for I never heard her called Miss Stanhope by anyone but the servants—was as good a soul as ever lived. She had that little vice, which on certain occasions exalts itself into a virtue, and which we have already noticed, curiosity ; but her motives were so good, that nobody who knew her ever called her inquisitions in question. They were not always convenient, it is true, and might have something vague about them to the general listener ; but she had a reason of her own for most things that she said and did, and it not unfrequently became apparent when least expected. The day before Charlie's departure for Bognor, she sat for some time evidently big with thought, and plied her knitting, the only work

she condescended to engage in—fine, strong, warm, Welsh-woollen socks for her boys for the shooting season.

"Charlie, do you know a man I can depend upon to do a commission for me?" said the lady.

"Very few; but it depends upon what it is. Shall I do?" said the gentleman.

"No, not you; you know I never ask irrelevant questions. Is your friend Mr. Cressingham still in town?"

"I believe he is; why?"

"Well! I like the look of him better than De Beauvoir or Mr. Dacre."

"De Beauvoir's an ass; Teddy's not a bad fellow, but scarcely to be depended upon for business. Won't the family lawyer, old Mr. Sharpus, do?"

"Certainly not; he's no better than I am myself—an honest old woman."

"Then it must be Cressingham. If I can find him at the club this morning I'll bring him here. Aunt Mary, you're a regular *Œdipus*."

"If Lady Elizabeth heard that, she'd say *you* were no conjuror? Sphinx, I suppose you mean; you're the *Œdipus* you know."

"Ah, well! good morning; I never was much of a hand at that sort of thing; I'll bring Cressingham back to lunch."

No sooner was Charlie Thornhill gone than Mary Stanhope was once more interrupted. Fortunately, knitting is not like the throes of composition, and will bear interruption. I have often imagined that it acts almost like a sedative; and rather strengthens for the infliction, or enables to bear with patience, what to an utterly idle or thoroughly busy mind might be an infliction. Mrs. Thornhill opened the door, and occupied her son's vacant seat. As she had the "Times" in her hand, you may be quite sure she came for conversation. Wherever I see a person seize the newspaper, and retire doggedly to a distant arm-chair, or to his own room, I know he or she means reading; but when I see them come into a room, already occupied, from another part of the house, newspaper in hand, I always assume that they mean talking, and prepare myself accordingly. A large sheet like the "Times" covers a multitude of sins.

"Mary," said Mrs. Thornhill, spreading the paper upside down, and staring silently at it so as to hide her face, "what's the matter with Charlie?"

"Nothing at all, my dear, that I can see; he looks well enough."

"Oh! yes; but he talks of reading for some examination, either for the army or for some government appointment; and he has ordered his horses to be sold. I'm sure he'll make himself ill."

"The most useful thing he has done, my dear, for years. Don't be at all alarmed about Charlie." Miss Stanhope liked nobody to spoil him but herself. "I thought it was Tom you came to talk about." This was a fib; but certain authorities have dealt very leniently with this vice, so that lying, upon occasion, becomes almost commendable.

"Tom! oh no, poor dear Tom," said the widow, with one of her sweetest smiles, and a not very deep sigh, "he has but one fault."

"Yes; and that one leads to everything bad, and will end in utter ruin. Speak to him about his play before it's too late, Emily."

"I speak to Tom about his gambling!"

"Yes, you; who so fit as a mother? if he won't attend to you, do you think he will pay attention to me?"

"I'm sure he would," said the poor weak woman, "he's so affectionate; oh! if he would but marry." Mrs. Thornhill believed matrimony to be a sort of panacea—a Morison's pill-box made palatable. As to any young lady swallowing it, gilded with her son, no difficulty presented itself to her.

"And who would you like him to marry?" Mary Stanhope, you see had never learnt the Latin grammar; but the fact is, that so few people of condition do speak correctly, that we authors are considerably posed. "There's Julia Brown Smith—oh! Robinson Brown, is it? well, I'm always making mistakes about names, Emily, I know; but I can't help it. She's just as extravagant as he is, and hasn't half his sense. Then there's Lady Caroline Lambkin; a sick wife to nurse: he'd become more selfish than ever."

"I'm sure he's not selfish, Mary; he's the most liberal, kind-hearted, generous——"

"Yes, dear, but not self-denying; and there's a great deal of difference between the two." It's not astonishing how sensibly she could talk, and how foolishly she could act, upon occasion. She had petted and spoiled Tom; had given him all she could scrape together out of her own privy purse; had en-

couraged his extravagance at Eton ; and had never contradicted him, excepting in trifles, and then only out of opposition. When a boy, she had bought him cigars, which he was forbidden to smoke ; she sent him money to pay his childish debts of honour, when his father had refused the application ; and then he, in the end, usually got both. Even now, if anybody but herself had suggested that he required correction, she would have put herself into a violent ill-humour, and refused to believe one word to his prejudice. "Then there's that Miss Dacre, the pretty one, that we see everywhere."

"Well, now, Mary, what do you think of her? he's going there this season."

"Oh ! she's well enough ; but she's flighty : she's no stability, not an atom ; no more stability than a cat upon walnut-shells. Her sister's worth a dozen of her ; the one that came to the Carnabys with Lady Elizabeth what's her name ? an antediluvian sort of a name."

"Mastodon, Mary ; that's the name. If he'd only fall in love with somebody, I should be satisfied. As to Charlie, there are no hopes of him."

"That's a comfort ; he'd better learn to keep himself before he thinks of a wife. He'll fall in love quite soon enough for his own good, and somebody else's too." Miss Stanhope chose to consider that she had had a disappointment early in life.

All good things come round at last, and of course luncheon-time with everything else. When a man has a luncheon to go to, there's scarcely anything pleasanter, excepting breakfast and dinner. It's only convenience is that you can cut it when you please. Women never do cut it ; it is essential to them as a labourer's eleven o'clock, or his after-dinner pipe—not of wine. One of the accidents of luncheon to-day was the arrival of Mr. Cressingham, who, contrary to his wont—such is the force of example—ate a cutlet, some plum-pudding fried in slices, orange cream, a slice of cake, and finished with no end of brown sherry. I have no doubt it was all distasteful to him, but every man does it when he has nothing else to do. What gormandizers two-thirds of the men in London ought to be, say you ; *au contraire*, their minds are so occupied with what they shall eat for dinner, that they can scarcely be said to be unemployed. At length the last vestige of the meal was removed, and when the ladies ought to have gone up-stairs Miss Stanhope remained

behind. Cressingham had received orders, and lingered about the door, which Charlie deliberately shut in his face.

"Mr. Cressingham," said Aunt Mary, not having the slightest idea that she bored the man to death, "I want you to do a commission for me; I cannot do it for myself, and when I say horseflesh is concerned, you will understand that I am in a dilemma, or something of that sort you call it."

Cressingham suggested "a fix."

"Of course that's what I meant to say, 'a regular fix.' You know Charlie has taken to reading, and I'm sure it will injure his health, so I——"

"Permit me, Miss Stanhope," said Cressingham, "Charlie has not taken to reading, and I don't think he will injure his health."

"Do you know that his horses are to be sold?"

"Yes, Miss Stanhope, next Monday—one's a beauty."

"Is that his favourite?"

"Yes, it is: I don't know the price put upon the horse, but I should have thought twice about selling him."

"Will you buy him, Mr. Cressingham?" said Miss Stanhope, eagerly.

"Well, that's not precisely the same thing, you know. A man may not be obliged to part with what he has, though he may not be in a position to buy what he'd like to have. No, I can't buy him."

"Could you buy him for a friend without letting Charles Thornhill know anything about it?" said Miss Stanhope, again.

"Yes," said Cressingham, dragging out his words deliberately. "I could do so, of course: but he would know some time or other who had him; he's too good, Miss Stanhope, to be kept under a bushel."

"Under a good many bushels," said the lady, who was very matter of fact, and whose head was running upon the corn-bin; "but could you buy him for a friend, at a fair price, without letting the name transpire?"

"I must, in fact, buy him in my own name; that's easy enough."

"Do as you please about that; but I wish to buy him. Will you do this commission for me?" It was out at last.

"Certainly, I will ascertain the reserved price, and see what can be done to get him for you at as little money as possible."

"Don't do that, Charlie will get the money; don't let him

lose a shilling by the transaction, whatever you do. Only let me be the purchaser ; and, though I am a very economical person, I should'nt like it to go into any other hands. I really feel exceedingly obliged to you, Mr. Cressingham."

"All right, Miss Stanhope, your commission shall be done ; shall I send him to your London stables or to Thornhills ?"

"Oh ! to Thornhills, if you please," said Miss Stanhope. "We shall be gone from here in another week at the latest ; if I give you a blank cheque signed to fill up ——"

"No, no, Miss Stanhope ; that's too great a temptation ; wait till you have the horse, or know that you are to have him : I'll arrange the cheque, and let you know the price in good time." After a few minutes more of unimportant conversation, Cressingham took his leave.

Of all the race-courses in England, there's nothing like Goodwood ; and of all the empty-headed idiots that were to be found there at the end of July, 18—, there was no one equal to Mr. Robinson Brown, junior. Newmarket is, as a mere race-course, of course unapproachable. As a matter of business, of profit,—as the *piéd à terre* of the wealthy turfite, the ardent sportsman, or the legitimate betting-man,—there can be no comparison with any other place. Epsom has a hill, and a race which carries the blue riband of the turf with it ; but it has a London mob, and the transport of all the riot and drunkenness of England from its provincial dens to the hill ; and the grandeur of the Derby is lost in the profligacy of a public saturnalia. Ascot has its royalty, its carriages, and its Grand Stand—a terrible drawback to its former visible elegance, when dukes and marquises, with ladies fair and noble, encountered between the races the work-a-day world of men and women out for a holiday-making ; and instead of an indistinguishable mass of beauty, colour, whisker, and *épicerie bien gantée* we saw form and fashion from head to foot as it is and was, but as it seldom could be seen elsewhere by the dingy votaries of the unprivileged class. Doncaster boasts of a St. Leger and "t'Coop," with its proud old county families, and ancestral carriages, its Yorkshire tykeism, and its enthusiastic partisanship ; but there is but one course that unites sport, beauty, fashion, and the picturesque, without any alloy of dust, or smoke, or riot, or degradation—a scene which Watteau could have painted, Boccaccio have sung in all its integrity—and that is Goodwood. Its sloping lawn, how charming ; where beneath the shadow of that magni-

ficent belt of trees lie the loveliest women in the world, bright, sparkling, in a mixture of floods of light, and iced champagne, gorgeous in jewellery and toilette, or *simplices munditiis*, and conquering by the unsuspected nature of their unadorned loveliness. Here and there in attendance, are grouped the knightly cavalier of modern growth; watchful of his mistress's unexpressed wants, and ready to enhance the pleasures of a brilliant holiday by cheerful solicitude for her happiness. The undulating expanse of park land, studded with noble trees, and sweetened by the breath of the southern coast breeze, with the excitement of the pastime, the ostensible motive of the visit, add a charm to Goodwood, which must be experienced to be understood.

As usual, all the world was to be there. I mean, of course, the few thousands of happy mortals who put in a claim for that distinction. Out of that world there could have been no existence for Mr. John Robinson Brown; or, as he was more commonly known in his regiment, "dear Jane," or the "Heir Apparent," the latter sobriquet having been obtained from the preposterous exhibition of jewellery upon his person.

How he came to be Robinson Brown is simple enough. The Robinsons were respectable miners; that is, the grandfather and granduncles of "dear Jane." They amassed wealth by wholesome toil, unvarying honesty, and intelligence superior to their *confrères*, and undeviating luck. From excavating the ground when soft, and from blasting it when hard, and from the pick and the borer, they raised themselves gradually, at a time when some mechanical knowledge was exceedingly valuable. They became tenants in fee simple of some land which proved considerably more productive beneath its surface than upon it, and the wealth of the three brothers centred at length in the only heir, the father of Mr. John Robinson Brown. A long minerity added to his already ample fortune; of him might be truly quoted the lines of Horace, with a pardonable second intention:—

*"Illi robur et æs triplex
Circæ pectus erat."*

His soul was steeled with threefold gold; Mr. Robinson was one of the hardest, richest, and vulgarest men alive. He was essentially a man of a vulgar mind. His wealth had brought him education at Harrow and Oxford, his incapability for the

ordinary accomplishments of a country gentleman had given him his only redeeming qualification, a fondness for books; not poor men's books, but expensive mediæval manuscripts, and richly-bound rarities, which could excite the appetite of the truly learned or the hereditarily noble. He had the same taste for furniture. A drawing-room paper was only valuable as it gave an opportunity for exposing the cost, at eight shillings a yard; and a picture was estimable by its capacity for depth of frame. At this time, as a young man, he married—not a woman, but money. Miss Brown, of Manchester, was undistinguishable save as the niece of the richest of cotton-spinners; a good man, a clever man, but proud of the name and honest industry by which civic honours, wealth, and reputation had belonged to three generations of Browns. Mr. Brown knew nothing of his nephew-in-law; but when he died he left his fortune, without his character, to his niece's husband, upon condition that he added the name of Brown to his own. It would have been better had it been Howard or Neville; but he went to bed one night Robinson, with five hundred thousand, and rose the next morning Brown, with a million of money to his name.

Robinson Brown had since then cultivated the peerage; and he loved a lord not for the good he did, but for what he was. His house was full of them now, and amongst his favoured guests came the Dacres. He had seen, perhaps, his own mistake in wedding a Miss Brown of Manchester, and he was anxious to remedy the defect in his son. His pride of purse was so great that he rather preferred a portionless girl, to whose dazzled senses the brightness of his money might be the more apparent. So he held divers conversations with Mrs. Robinson Brown, who pumped her son very satisfactorily, and it seemed to be a settled affair between father, mother, and son, that the latter should endow one of the Misses Dacre of Gilsland, a Talbot and a Greystock, with the ample resources and inane insipidity of a Robinson Brown.

Under the aforesaid trees in Goodwood there was, amongst other gay and happy parties, a circle as gay and as happy as any. Robinson Brown, to do him justice, had given every facility to his guests for enjoying themselves. All that excellent cookery, and the best champagne, well iced, could do had been done. The weather, too, was propitious; and some of his friends had won a good stake or two. The selection of

women did Mrs. Robinson Brown great credit. They were very good-looking, *distinguées*, and had been got together without any of that jealousy which would have excluded rivalry to the Brown girls. Alice and Edith Dacre looked positively lovely. Tom Thornhill had just come back to the Stand, and was receiving the congratulations of his friends on having won a good handicap. Charlie was seated on a drag just outside the rails of the lawn, and dividing his attention between cold pie and champagne and the Robinson Brown party.

"Charlie, who's that talking to Dacre's sister, with lots of harness—jewellery, I mean: the man with lank whiskers, and looking generally washed out?"

"Don't you know? Why the biggest fool in England—Robinson Brown."

"Don't say so? that's the 'Heir Apparent,' is it? he's a very good-looking one."

"Oh! come, nonsense, Truffles, you know better than that."

"And there's your brother Tom: the Plunger doesn't show quite so well by the side of him; he's talking to the other Miss Dacre. What a pity they have no money. Had your brother backed his filly for anything?"

"Thornhill," said a jovial-looking young man, from the wheel of the drag, "come into the Stand a minute, that's a good fellow."

"What is it?" said Charlie, lighting a cigar at the same moment.

"They're talking about a match between one of your brother's hunters and a horse of 'dear Jane's'; they want to know if you'll ride, so come down."

Charlie had been vacillating for some time between a little fit of the sulks and his wish to join the party with whom his brother was now talking. He knew most of them well; but the Dacres frightened him: and he saw neither Lady Marston, nor Lady Elizabeth Montague Mastodon. But for this friendly chance of cutting-in, he must have left Mr. Robinson Brown master of the position. He slowly descended from the drag, stood ten minutes smoking and talking to the ambassador from the lawn, finally threw away his cigar, and without saying a word strode silently off at the back of the trees towards the Stand.

With half a dozen nods to the men whom he knew, and a cheerful five minutes' chat with Lady Marston, whom he met on the way, he joined the happy group he had been longing to join for the last two hours.

"We have a match on between your brother's brown horse and Robinson Brown's mare Reluctance, 12 st., to be run in November, in Leicestershire or Northamptonshire, will you ride?"

Charlie hesitated.

"Do, Mr. Thornhill, I shall back your brother, if you will ride for him," said Alice Dacre; still Charlie hesitated: he wanted a word or a look from Edith. He did not quite understand why he did not get it. She had shaken hands with him, and was now apparently listening to the platitudes of Robinson Brown.

"Oh! I'm so glad you like steeple-chasing, Miss Edith, it is so delightful: so much—aw—aw—fresh air and that sort of thing, you know."

"Dangerous, I think," said Mrs. Brown.

"Cruel, I fear," said the oldest Miss Brown.

"Do you think it dangerous, Miss Edith? of course, you know, naturally—aw—aw—I mean aw—post and wails, and hairwy ditches, and that sort of thing. But——"

"Some people's heads are thick enough for anything. I should think there was no harm in your riding, Mr. Brown." Here everybody laughed excepting Brown, who did not seem to know at what they were laughing.

"Oh, no! besides I have widden before, Miss Dacre, and it's quite delightful. Did I win? No, no! I didn't win. I got into the bwok, you know. I got vewy wet; of course I was wet, you know."

"But some people are not born to be drowned, Mr. Brown," and another cheerful roar greeted this second sally. "And what did you do in the brook?"

"Oh! I stood their and wung——"

"Your hands, I presume," said Lady Elizabeth.

"No, my pocket-handkerchief; it was so vewy uncomfortable and then the man to whom the horse belonged, a howwid Colonel Somebody, came down and abused me for not winning; he said if I'd only holloed at him, he'd have jumped it like—like anything. But I'd lost all my bweath by the time we came to the water, so of course I couldn't hollo. You know, Miss

Dacre, a fellow couldn't hollo without any bweath, could he?"

"Do you intend to ride your brother's horse," said Edith, turning suddenly round upon Charlie Thornhill. "Is he a very good horse? They all think he can win, if you ride him."

Charlie smiled, a happy, pleased smile: it was all he wanted, and said, "Yes, he is a capital horse; he doesn't know how to fall. You had better back him; I think I shall win:" the last *setto voce*.

"I will back him, and I hope you may." She nodded her head guily at the same time, and turned to speak to one of the Misses Robinson Brown, who were paying her marked attention.

In the meantime Tom Thornhill had been receiving the congratulations of his friends. He ought to have been a happy man, but he was not. There was one voice, for which he began to care too much, and that had not joined in the general expression of congratulations. Alice Dacre looked grave, and held her peace: Love's eyes are prophetic of danger. She turned to Charlie, and said, "Your brother has won a good deal of money has he not?"

"I believe so, but I never ask about his betting book: the stakes are not much." Charlie was always communicative to Alice Dacre.

"Did you bet on the filly he ran?"

"No, Miss Dacre; I never bet, excepting a mere trifle. You know I can't afford it.

"Nobody can afford it, at least if reputation is of any value." Alice Dacre joined to a naturally acute and very truthful mind a great dislike to unequal associations for those she liked: and she heard and saw too much of the evils of the system to shut her eyes to its results. But what was it to her if Tom Thornhill ruined himself body and soul; she had no power to avert it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

“Time is the old justice that examines all offenders.”

As You Like It.

THE reading public has a great love for the aristocracy, or authors of the present day are labouring under an error. I dare no more have written of the Smiths, the Joneses, and the Greens, than I could have ventured upon a treatise against mesmeric influence, with the hope of popularity. Nor is it a love for the virtues of the upper classes which awakens this apparent interest in their proceedings. On the contrary, I have rather noticed an anxiety for any description of the frivolities and vices of fashionable society. And certainly there is no lack of writers ready to exhibit their own intimate connection with these classes, and who take delight in displaying an acquaintance with folly to which we have no parallel amongst them within my knowledge. The devil is never so black as he is painted; and if in these pages the reader be struck by a more economical use of high-toned vice, and some pictures of its sense and worth, I shall ask him to pause before he sets me down as a flatterer and a sycophant, and to inquire for himself after that wonderful virtue of the middle classes which has been hiding itself under a bushel for some time past. Experience, I think, Fielding declares to be the first of the gifts necessary for the successful development of a story—as needful for the portrayal of a duke as of a prize-fighter, of a duchess as of a scullery-maid. If this be so, I cannot compliment the majority of the caterers for public taste on the society in which they must have passed much of their time, who give to a nobleman or gentleman the principles of a stableman, and to a lady of rank the weakness or heartlessness of a professional profligate.

A few months after the scene at Goodwood, and when the natural fruit of such circumstances had arrived at maturity; that is, when Tom Thornhill had made further inroads on his property, but was as cheerful and happy as ever; when the fascinating John Robinson Brown began to speculate on the chances of his success with Edith Dacre with almost less fear and trembling than on the event of the match between Reluc-

tañce and the brown horse ; when Alice Dacre had had some practice in steeling her heart against a gambler, and found how difficult it was to do so ; when Edith had had time to weigh the value of Mr. Robinson Brown's acres against the honestest but least-confident love that could be offered her ; and when Charlie himself, finding out the real state of his heart, and pocket, had made up his mind that if work could win what he most valued on earth, no toil should deter him from its pursuit ; then it was that Mr. Burke sat patiently in the back office of a house in the principal street of the city of Cork. Pleasant images passed through his brain. He was prosperous, respected, unsuspected ; had a good digestion, and suffered less from conscientious pangs than most men. He had thriven immensely since the perpetration of his great rascality. He had possessed himself of the title-deeds of the little estate belonging to Kildonald—he had safe in his custody the receipt for the few thousands of purchase-money for that estate which had been sent by him to poor Geoffrey Thornhill, the victim of a mistake, which accident, however, had thus enriched him. The same channel which carried to him the receipt, amongst other papers, which happened to be on his person on the day of the murder, brought him the betting-book, which was mysteriously forwarded to Sir Frederick Marston, by which happy incident his bets were paid. Since that day, for some reasons, Mr. Burke had confined his attentions to the sister isle as a betting man, excepting on some few occasions, by commission, modestly ignoring the scenes of former triumphs or reverses. He now sat happy in apparent prosperity, and in the respect of all good men and some very bad ones.

His office-door opened, and a shock-headed Irish clerk appeared with a pen behind his ear and a sheet of half-copied parchment in his hand.

"Here's some one to see you, Misther Burke."

"What is his business ?" said Mr. Burke.

"It isn't conveyancing, I'll go bail, nor to buy the Ballymoony estate."

"What's he like ?"

"Faix he's no beauty then ; but some of us is none the worse for that." Here Phelim stroked his own chin, which would have been the better for a razor.

"Send him in, and be in the way, Phelim," and the respectable Mr. Burke put on his most respectable look. It was rather thrown away upon the figure that now entered the room.

A sturdy-looking countryman in a frieze coat, drab hat, gaiters, a black or dark-brown wig, and large whiskers of the same colour, stood in the doorway and looked stealthily round. "May I come in?" said he, and without waiting reply, he turned the lock of the door, and began divesting himself of his wig and whiskers. Having done so, he appeared to have light-coloured hair and red whiskers of no great size ; the change brought Burke to his feet with a look of horror.

"In God's name, Mike, where do you come from? Do you know your danger, man?"

"No man better, Mr. Burke, leastways if it's not yourself. It's a bad boat we've been sailing in," said the other with a cunning leer ; craft was the distinguishing characteristic of his face.

"Nonsense," rejoined Burke, still standing, and with his very lips of an ashen paleness, "nonsense, Mike ; what, in Heaven's name, brought you here?"

"Want, and a good will, sir. Money we must have, and will have."

"We! what's he doing here? George, I suppose you mean."

"Yes, George. We've been in London this six months, living, till I at least can live no longer, on what we can get. We must have money."

"Money! silence, Mike! Do you know that I could hang you?"

"Maybe ; but two can play at that ; I think I could hang you. You've most to lose, Mr. Burke ; consider what I say. Five hundred pounds down and we leave the country."

"You have done so once, and here you are back again. Besides, George will not go."

"I think he will ; he doesn't like the ould counthry ; there's no play for poor men."

"Where is he?" said Burke, knitting his brow and his fingers pressing his under lip.

"In London. He came to see his mother who is sick. He was useful in Australia, and will never stop in England ; the climate don't suit him. Besides, you owe us the money, Mr. Burke, and we want it."

"Want it indeed! so do many more ; but what of Kil-donald?"

"He's shot his last bolt, and lost ; I don't think he can rise again."

"If he does, it's only to go down again. Have you seen the 'Hue and Cry?' You are not safe here for a day."

"Then give me the money ; it's mine : and the paper has saved you."

"I tell you the paper was useless. Five hundred pounds ! Where's it to come from ?"

"We've nothing to do with that. We'll take care where it goes to. We'll be drinking your honour's health before the month's past." As Mike rose in spirits, Burke rose in temper. Burke was not constitutionally brave, but circumstances made him so ; and it was clear to him that vacillation with a man like Mike was worse than useless, it was dangerous. Apparently while hesitating as to his answer, he tore one half of a sheet of paper, and going to the door, unlocked it.

"Phelim," said he, "get me a shilling stamp." In a few minutes he again opened the door, during which time Mike had again put on his disguise. His clerk presented him with the stamp.

"Now," said he, "this is a mere acknowledgment of a debt of 100*l.*, for which I can sue you the moment you are known to be in this country ; such a transaction need compromise neither of us. Sign your name to that. Nay ! don't hesitate, Mike, for I can't afford to be robbed as often as you please for the eventual satisfaction of seeing you hanged."

"A hundred pounds !" laughed Mike ; "nonsense, Mистер Burke, the thing's impossible."

Burke took the key from the door and put it in his pocket. This was no place for a trial of strength, nor was Mike Heenan's position well fitted for the encounter. The relinquishment of 400*l.* gave him pain, but what was to be done ? "I'll never do it." Burke stepped back to a small and unobtrusive cabinet, well secured with a lock, and opened it. When he turned round again he held a pistol in his hand. Mike's reliance had been in his moral strength ; it wouldn't do.

"You have said that you and I swim in the same boat ; I believe it, and I will not trust you. Sign that paper, take your cheque, and never let me see you here again."

Mike looked at the pistol. "What will George say ?"

"Never you mind what George will say. Sign that paper ; and when you set foot on Irish soil again, it shall go into the

hands of the tipstaff, if needful. I would as soon be hanged in your company as live in the atmosphere of the canting hypocrites who surround us."

Mechanically then Mike Heenan signed it. The pistol and the paper, with sundry other valuable documents, were consigned to the strong chest again (a movement not overlooked by the astute client), and Mike was gone to divide his spoil with the Egyptians.

Two nights afterwards an entrance was effected into Burke's offices, and before the police arrived they had been ransacked; the cabinet yielded up its treasures, and, among other things, a paper, by which it is doubtful how long Burke will receive the Kildonald rents.

CHAPTER XXIV.

INDEPENDENCE.

"*Miserum est alienæ incumbere famæ.*"—JUV., VIII, 761.

THERE is as much difference between the advice a man gives himself and that which he gets from his friends, as there is between the nauseous draught of the apothecary made up for you and the dose of excellent port he reserves for his own affectionate drinking. In the one case you get a very palatable offering, the prescription of a flatterer, which is not likely to be of much service; in the other, the rough draught of one who is likely to give you the best he has, but not to make it too pleasant. One thing makes me very chary of taking advice at all; it is this: that no one can have the intimate acquaintance with your affairs which you possess yourself; and without that intimacy his counsel is likely to fall short of its true aim. Charlie Thornhill was very much of this opinion. Nobody quite knew him—his brother least of all—and nobody sympathized with him. His character was not one that courted confidence. He was a great favourite with those men whom he knew intimately, and his manly accomplishments tended to make him acceptable with many more, but there was scarcely one with whom he could be identified as a close and intimate

friend. It might be a fault in his nature. He was shy, and not clever: and he had a certain common sense, and a feeling of right not so popular amongst the young men of the world as it might be. He had none of the sharpness which they called common sense, and had an awkward manner of calling things by their right names, which made some men fight shy of him. But most persons would have done him a favour, if in their power; and the worst to be urged against him was that he was not very amusing. Almost everyone admitted certain good qualities of temper, courage, and honesty: but no one thought of him as a person to be served. It is true that appearances were against his standing in need of it, and his natural reserve would have effectually prevented his asking a favour, had he seen his necessities as one or two persons saw them.

Lady Marston was not only a woman in all the best and kindest gifts of woman's nature—in its constancy and truth, in its affection and tenderness, in its forethought and tact, but in all the perseverance and active courage in behalf of her *protégés* which are supposed to belong to men and ministers in want of a return. She was not, therefore, likely to forget Charlie. She knew his necessities better than he did himself. She knew, too, how he could best help himself, for she had watched him from a boy. She knew his truth and his honest nature, his idleness and ignorance, and his strong good sense. But she knew how difficult it would be to help him in a world where everybody was fighting and struggling and cheating and bribing for self. Delicacy urged her to go to Mrs. Thornhill; but Mrs. Thornhill, since her husband's mysterious death, had been out of the world. She had no political influence, no politics. Then she thought of Tom, and she found him willing to support his brother, to give him half of his fortune, if he wanted it; in fact, to do anything but tease his friends for their interest with the minister, or the Home Department, or the Foreign Office; for anything of which Charlie, to say truth, was not eminently fitted by his antecedents.

"But, my dear Lady Marston, what can he want with anything to do? He's welcome to anything I have, you know. There's always a home for him at Thornhills; lots of shooting—the best bird season I have known for years; and there's my black hack for him to ride. And when my uncle Henry dies he'll have all that. And I only wish it was ten times as much for his sake."

"But you don't understand your brother's position, Tom. He ought to be independent of circumstances. Life's very uncertain; so is banking. Your uncle may live for forty years, or the bank may go to-morrow."

"Bless my soul! Lady Marston, how you frighten one! I hope it won't," said Tom Thornhill, laughing. "Let him come to Melton, and we'll put him up among us. You persuade him: he'll do anything for you."

Well, of course this was useless. It was no use wasting time on his brother; and Mary Stanhope was not much better. "Charlie at business! Why, he'll be ill in a week. Besides, what's he to do? He'd better marry somebody. I suppose he will some day. Why can't he go and live with his mother? that's the best place for a young man now-a-days. They're always in mischief."

From such sage advisers Lady Marston turned to Lord Tiverton. The Premier was a charming person, impervious to anything; always smiling and joking, *il se moquait de tout le monde*. He enjoyed the temperament of a duck's back. He was, however, a *beau garçon*, somewhat *passé*, and had a reputation for saying the pleasantest things in the world. A refusal was always a difficulty with him; to Lady Marston an impossibility.

"A favour, Lady Marston? A pleasure to grant it. Anything I can do. Of course we must manage something for him." And on he rattled. "Remember his father? Yes, poor fellow; indeed I do. Rather crotchety about the Game Laws for current opinion, but a capital fellow, capital fellow."

Can he speak Spanish? because I think we could manage something. What? nothing but his own language? That's a bore. Now a little German or something of that sort goes a great way. Even if it's quite useless, and a man can neither speak it, read it, nor write it, still in these days, you know, public opinion must be considered. Perhaps he could *say* he knew something about it, and take his chance. He *might* satisfy the examiners. It's all great nonsense. I'm sure I couldn't pass an examination myself. Yes, yes, we must do something for him. Why doesn't his brother go into Parliament?"

It was very vague, and Lady Marston knew the world too well to place much reliance upon it, so she turned her fascinations next upon Lord Thomas Charter. Little Tommy Charter,

or little Lord Tommy, as he was familiarly called by the great unwashed, was brother of a Whig duke, the first statesman in England, the most popular of reformers, author of the "Life of Mumbo Jumbo," the African traveller, and the "History of his own Times," and everybody else's. He was a small, sallow, sharp-featured man, highly conscientious, and who stuck to his party through thick and thin, whichever it happened to be.

"Busy, Lady Marston? Indeed I am. But, never mind; let us see what can be done. I suppose we are sure of Marston on the Episcopal Clearance Bill? The country gets more practical every day. There's the Sand and Blotting-paper Office: can't we do something for your friend in that? Examination? True, true; but it's very trifling. History of England—good knowledge of modern Europe, in fact, very essential—Italy especially; she's in a very peculiar position: couple of modern languages; say French and German: Latin absolutely necessary—a little of it; but no earthly use; a science or two; and mathematics, of course. By-the-way, tell your friend to be well up in the provisions of the Great Charter. No man ever yet did any good in this world who didn't appreciate the efforts of Stephen Langton and his followers."

Lady Marston was not sanguine enough to imagine that Charlie Thornhill would qualify (as he would have called it) for this stake; but she could not but thank the great statesman for his kindness, and say that she hoped she should be able to write to him a line in a day or two. Lord Tommy knew nothing of sinecures; his whole life had been spent in abolishing jobs and distributing patronage according to merit—or at least professing to do so, when everybody was looking on. He was the very man who had lately discarded his third wife's half-brother, a young man from the Board of Bricks and Mortar, enjoying his 800*l.* per annum, for his irregularity. At the end of the first month he was reported, at the end of the second reprimanded, at the end of the third he was reported again, and by the end of the fourth he was dismissed, and another reigned in his stead. It is true that he had married somewhat discredibly upon 800*l.* per annum, and it was necessary to make an example to deter others from following so bad an example. Strange fatality! his name, too, was Charles. The Charlies were an unlucky lot.

The next person to whom Lady Marston applied was the

late Wentworth Jones, now Lord Silkstone. At Eton he was Bill Jones, rather a swell, high up in the sixth, and a very good fellow. At Christchurch he became Wentworth Jones, forgetting the Billy, and report said pretty truly that he had come into a good fortune as well as a good name. Then he went into Parliament, worked hard, had a ready wit, and unfailing memory for other persons' shortcomings, which made him an invaluable debater; for though deficient in knowledge he was never afraid to display his ignorance. Such valuable qualities could not be overlooked: he was taken by the hand by the Premier, and by the nose by Lord Tommy, who found him very useful for a time, and when he was in the way had him elevated to the peerage under the title of Baron Silkstone. From that day the little Joneses became Honourable Wentworths, and their father became more polished, more civil, and less sincere than ever. He rode the neatest of hacks, had the smallest of grooms, wore the best-cut coats, and the most lemon-coloured gloves of any man in England.

When he was first applied to on behalf of our hero he suggested at once the colonies. He was overpowered by his wish to serve so charming a person as Lady Marston. How he longed for whole hosts of governorships of South Pacific Islands, secretaryships of Pulo Penangs, commissionerships of Jungle-guava, attachéships to the embassy of Owhyee, and half a dozen other ships of every line but the right one! And now, when pressed to say what he could positively hold out, he made a definite promise of a nice snug little sinecure on the coast of Western Africa, within easy reach of M. du Chaillu's cannibals, and where Charlie would succeed a gentleman who had been eaten alive by a crocodile whilst performing his ablutions. The charming smile, white teeth, and bland *empressement* with which it was offered enhanced the value of this desirable post, and it was with considerable difficulty that Lady Marston could refuse it in sufficiently polite terms.

"I am really exceedingly obliged, Lord Silkstone, for the interest you so kindly take in my friend Mr. Thornhill, but the young man for whom I am asking the favour is strong and healthy at present, and might if taken in his raw state, disagree with the crocodiles."

I've never heard that the Honourable Wentworth was selected to fill the post vacated by the hardy bather.

Having waited a short time for something to turn up, and not

hearing from either of her ministerial friends of anything more promising than the West African Station, Lady Marston consulted her husband.

Sir Frederick Marston was a sensible, accomplished man ; practical in all points ; fond of the world in which he lived, in no bad sense ; very modern in his ideas, though not without a hopeful touch of chivalry in his nature. He married his wife because he loved her, but he was not the less happy to find that she adorned her station, and was exactly fitted to be "Lady Marston." The consequence of his appreciation was a happy mixture of deference and affection, and that sort of intercourse which results from a mutual conviction of each other's capabilities.

"Well ! Frederick, nothing has been done for Charles Thornhill yet."

"My dear, you seem to look upon Charles in the light of a pauper."

"So he is, to all intents and purposes. I can hardly conceive a more painful position than that of a man able and willing to work but compelled to live upon the charity of others."

"Surely a mother's offering to a son's necessities is scarcely charity ?"

"Up to a certain age, no ; afterwards, yes. And what charms me with Charlie is, that he feels it to be so."

"It's the case with half the aristocracy, where no provision can be, or has been, made for the younger children. What's the use of a large house and a comfortable jointure ?"

"Mrs. Thornhill has not too large a jointure, Frederick ; and, though she can well afford a home and a few hundreds for a younger son, Charlie's view of his own position is the true one. So let us help him as far as we can."

"With all my heart, my dear ; but that won't make him independent. There's very little real independence in this world ; and if there were much, what a terrible set of savages we should be ! The only really independent person of my acquaintance is my trainer, Turner ; and he not only does as he likes with his own, but with mine too."

"Well, then, independent or not, will you help him to do as he likes ?" said Lady Marston, checking her husband's inclination for a discussion, of which Sir Frederick was remarkably fond.

"Will a Government office suit him ?" asked the baronet.

"I think not, if it means an examination without some preparation. And if he has that he may as well go into the army, which he has talked of a hundred times."

"Well, an examination of some sort he must have : not very severe, I apprehend. Whether it does much good, I don't know. I think we shall have an inferior class of men, well prepared for special service, but not likely to make such general servants. The education of a gentleman usually fits a man for any duties we have to put him to."

"Excepting in modern languages," said Lady Marston.

"No English boys can know much about them, unless educated abroad. And a comparison with us and foreigners in this respect is unfair : the Continent throws men of all languages together : there is both a greater facility for acquiring them, and a readier means for exercising them. But I don't think we're much behind them in essentials—eh, Kate? And you know I was a terrible reformer in that line once upon a time. No ; Charlie will do best for a grenadier, or the household brigade."

"I almost agree with you ; and if he reads for the one he will fit himself for anything that may fall out by the way. And now the sooner he is out of London the better. We must find a good tutor for him, who'll read with him and teach him to read for himself. That's rather out of my line, Frederick," said Lady Marston, who was beginning to think she had entered upon a rather too masculine undertaking. "However, you and he can settle that between you. Only, if you have anything to do with it, beware of Gilsland, and don't let him get too near Melton." With this sage advice Lady Marston started on some other benevolent errand, and Sir Frederick went into committee on the Buffertown railway, and forgot, for a time, the very existence of his wife's *protégé*.

Charlie, the person most concerned in these arrangements, was in the meantime enjoying himself as we have seen ; but he was constantly visited with an anxious desire to do something for himself. He knew he was leading an unprofitable sort of existence, and envied hundreds who would like to have changed places with him : that's natural. Charlie had not much light, as the Rev. Struggle Muffins would say ; but what he had was pretty clear. He did not get into mischief with his eyes shut ; and, though that is the more excusable error, it is not the less dangerous. Hitherto he might have been described as some

horses—he always had a leg to spare. He passed his time very comfortably ; but the thought was constantly recurring that he ought to be doing something else. I do not think that it ever occurred to Charlie Thornhill that the whole of the set were going down hill, or that there was something abstractedly wrong in wasting time, gambling, getting in debt, and the like. He had not been educated in a strict school of discipline. He thought it wrong for himself, because he individually could not afford it. Time was wanted to strengthen the growth of principles which seemed almost inherent in his nature, if such things be. He seems to have been honest by nature, thoughtful by nature, courageous by nature, chivalrous by nature : as yet he had tried to improve none of nature's gifts. He had a speedy way of administering rough justice of his own ; he liked good eating and drinking ; was an active enemy to poaching, vulpecide, and dissent, and had a horror of books ; these were the gifts of education. When he wanted a cheque he went to his mother ; when he wanted advice or sympathy, to Lady Marston ; when he wanted what he knew to be decidedly wrong, and what would be met by remonstrance from either of these, he went to Mary Stanhope.

He had a great deal of conversation with Sir Frederick ; as much, in fact, as that legislator could find time for. He held out no great prospects in a Government official situation ; besides which, the thing was in itself distasteful to Charlie. As the matter of consultation was only a compliment to his former guardian, he was not long in coming to a decision in favour of pipeclay ; and it then only remained to look for a tutor.

Tutors are of various kinds. There is the well-educated university man, rather stiff, formal, whose ex-parochial existence is passed amongst dry tomes ; who reads strictly with his natural enemies for a certain number of hours each day, addresses them as Mr., greets them night and morning with a bland smile and courtly bow, imparts what he knows, which is not much of modern requirements, and is not eminently successful in his calling.

There is the rough-and-ready, pipe-smoking, slovenly tutor ; a clever, well-informed, half-idle, half-energetic person, of seedy coat and unkempt hair. Cares little enough about any tastes, inclinations, or habits for good or evil, but goes the shortest possible road to a certain object, by cramming and coaching, and talking and repeating, until he thinks the head is full which

came to be filled. How soon it empties itself again is another question, but is not in the bond.

There is your respectable country clergyman, whose only qualifications are his former scholarship and his present necessities. Little enough is done in such hands, except (if he is fortunate enough to have a daughter or two, which all of them have) love-making. An excellent man is he, and as unfit to restrain impetuous youth, to deal with idleness and deceit, to direct a misguided mind, or urge a slothful one, as any man alive. He would teach, if his pupils would learn ; but he has neither persuasion nor vigour to induce them to do so.

Above all, there is your utter incapable—not impossibly an old soldier ; who, having dissipated time and money on whist and sangaree, comes home to discover that there is one profession still open to a gentleman. Knowing nothing, he sets to work to teach it. Finding that even impossible, he sends for assistance. Lo ! there appears a third-rate Cambridge man, whom a career of low dissipation had almost stranded, when his happy chance—the *education of youth*—presents itself. Perhaps an Irishman, a Dublin B.A., a capital mathematician when sober, willing to teach anything from hopscotch to the binomial theorem, takes a part in the guidance of the pupil. Then a Frenchman or German hairdresser, who is always a political refugee, not unfrequently in correspondence with exiled royalty, is engaged to teach modern language. A drawing-master does his department, and a lecturer from the Polytechnic does the natural sciences, unless that falls also to the share of the versatile Irishman. As to the chief, he disdains work, and does no department whatever.

But we waste time. It was to one of the latter that Charlie was introduced before long, who, to his natural urbanity, added a vicinity to Gilsland : the latter point carried the day. Charlie went to bed in the consciousness of having done something for himself, and Captain Armstrong retired to rest happy in having added one more to the list of his victims.

CHAPTER XXV.

TWO OF A TRADE.

“Have more than thou showest ;
Speak less than thou knowest.”—*Lear* i, 4.

To a dingy-looking house of considerable size, in one of the numerous streets which run parallel to Portland Place—be it Wimpole Street, Harley Street, or any other, matters not—I beg to transport my reader. There is a heavy respectability in the sombre darkness which belongs to this quarter. The carriages, “*rari in gurgite nantes*,” are of the heavy order ; round, sleek, fat, pursy horses ; family coachmen ; yellow chariots, or long and low barouches, stand about at 4 p.m. at intervals. Paralytic old ladies, with wondrous bonnets of flowers, feathers, or bugles, and shaking ringlets, the undeniable handiwork of Mr. Truefitt, come creeping out on the arms of their footmen, and here and there a pretty girl, with airs tottering on the steps of Belgravian audacity, rustles down the doorsteps in attendance on dear grandmamma. Here is the house of a millionaire merchant, who disdains the fashionable *quartier*, and sticks to his prejudices. Magnificent collections of water-colours adorn the walls ; articles of vertu cover the ormolu and mosaic tables ; costly wines, port unknown in regal cellars, and choice Madeira of many a voyage, stock the cellar ; and a not inglorious hospitality is shared with men of his own time and weight, which is never under sixteen stone, and may be four-and-twenty. There is the abode of a prosperous banker ; a junior in one of the great City firms—a junior only ; for your chief of the firm affects Piccadilly and the *beau monde*, has a stud in Gorsehamptonshire, and a moor in Scotland, and entertains his West-end clients. But the junior is rich and old, and will be richer, if older. For he loves nothing but himself and his money, and is alone in the world. He has quarrelled with his only sister years ago, for disgracing herself and him by marrying a handsome Irish scapegrace (at that time about town, but having since disappeared under conviction of “nobbling,” and some suspicions of manslaughter), called Kildonald. He has heard of her since, in childbirth in a foreign country, in sickness, and in

want, but he has never relented towards her and the innocent children for whom she pleaded. He is nearly twenty years her senior, and once loved Norah, and took care of her. But she left his house, and he cannot forget it; he is proud to think that his prophecies of Kildonald have been more than fulfilled. He knew him better than she. Such is Roger Palmer; of the firm of Mint, Chalkstone, Palmer, and Co., Bankers, of East Goldbury, City, London.

Roger Palmer had treated himself to a little fire; the evenings, he remarked to himself, get cold in October, and others remarked to themselves that Roger Palmer was getting older every day. He had eaten a good dinner, and was not so much out of temper as he looked. He was white, small, fragile, with pinched features and a very fair complexion. His mouth was very thin-lipped and close, and his forehead was low, but broad. He did not want intellect, but was wholly without high aspirations. He loved money for itself, and his cold, silent, badly-furnished rooms testified it. He was a childless widower, and he did not lament the loss of his wife so much as he rejoiced in the curtailment of his expenses. As a young man he was not penurious, only careful. He loved to have a large balance, in case of emergencies: as he grew richer the feeling strengthened, and now he was a simple miser. Money was his god; he hugged it and worshipped it, as God is seldom worshipped; but he would not burn it, as an idol, to keep himself warm. Well! there he sat, over his little fire, warming himself and his bright old toes; for he was scrupulously clean, and could not forget that he was of the firm of Mint, Chalkstone, and Co. And by degrees odd matters assumed a form. The old man saw his sister, as she was when he first took her to a small house in London, before he became a partner in the bank. Then he wondered whether her children had inherited her grace and beauty, and her self-will—this last thought was a little compromise. Then he thought of Kildonald, his good-looking face, his bad reputation, his grace of manner, his latitude of principle, his turf practices, and his final disappearance. "Thornhill! Ah! poor Thornhill!" thought he; "but for his kindness what should I have been? Where would have been Mint, who never saw a race, and Chalkstone, who never played a rubber, and the Co.? We must all have gone in the panic, but for the propping and bolstering of Henry Thornhill and his kind-hearted brother Geoffrey."

Two or three weeks after this soliloquy, Roger Palmer found himself in the little parlour at the back of the banking-house in Pall Mall, face to face with Henry Thornhill. Never were men less alike, physically and mentally. The one was robust, fresh-looking, handsome; the other, mean-looking and business-like, with an air of sharpness out of place west of Temple Bar. The one was kindly and well-mannered, and abrupt in spite of his nature; the other was husky and dry, and only genial upon principle. There in his leathern chair sat the West-end banker, and over against him the City man of business. Both had a respect for certain qualities of the other: one was exalted by absolute superiority, the other assumed temporal equality by a great act of studied and unusual justice, which he was there to do. After a few minutes' conversation, therefore, and leaning forward with his elbows upon the arms of the chair he occupied, Roger Palmer said, "Thornhill, you know what we owe you, you, who are occupied in the same pursuits, who have the same anxieties; and I look upon it as an obligation that can never be repaid."

"Well, Palmer, be it so," replied the other; "it is long ago, and I think you would have done the same by us. You attach too much credit to my personal share of the business. I am only glad that by means of poor Geoffrey I was able to help you."

"Help! God help you in a like case, my friend!" said the little miser, cordially, and almost wringing his hands with the recollection. "It was life to us; we were gone—at our last gasp—Thornhills saved us. Oh, how often I've thought of that Sunday night, which seemed to separate us from ruin and disgrace! But I want another favour, Thornhill."

"There's no Geoffrey now, Palmer. What is it? surely not money?"

"Yes, money, money; but a surplus. I want your advice. Will you be my executor? I must make my will; that's the load on my mind at present."

"What's become of your sister, Roger Palmer? you had one once. Where is she? what is she doing?" asked Henry Thornhill.

"No, no, hush! I've sworn, never—not one stiver;" and the old man frowned, and his lips closed so tightly as to disappear, whilst thick veins swelled in his forehead. "She laughed me to scorn; she eat of my bread and drank of my

cup, and when the wolf came she turned to him in spite of the shepherd's warning. I might be generous, but now I mean to be just."

"Then be just and generous at the same time, and leave your money to your own relatives," said the West-end tradesman.

"It's what you will do, I presume," rejoined the City magistrate; "but you know nothing of the ingratitude of women, as I do."

"Of course not;" and a deep sigh was following, which Henry Thornhill suppressed with a strong effort; "of course not. But if you do not leave your money, as I tell you, to Mrs. Kildonald or her children, I'll have nothing to do with it. There, Palmer, we're old friends and need not quarrel; but you know my mind."

Henry Thornhill was too generous to add the repayment of an obligation to his advocacy of what was right. But Roger Palmer had done what we all do occasionally for ourselves: he had fashioned a course of justice in accordance with his own inclination, and intended to abide by it.

"And your nephews, your brother's boys, how are they? what are they doing?"

"The elder is spending money, like his poor father; and the younger—well, the younger is thinking of making of it, if he can; that's like you, you know." And Henry Thornhill smiled a grim smile as he clutched his friend's extended hand.

"Does he need it? does he want a profession?" said the little man, eagerly.

"As much as anyone that wishes to be independent, and is not so."

"Then why not take him in here? What an opening for him!"

"Humph! that's as may be. Perhaps he might be better with you," said the uncle.

"Oh, come, come, Thornhill, nonsense? Now think of what I've said. Bless my heart, it's a provision for the Prince of Wales."

"And you think of what I've said; and do as you ought to do with your money. When you've made up your mind to follow my advice, come to me, and I'll be your executor. Good-by." And Roger Palmer departed on his way eastward, and Henry Thornhill sat down again to a ledger, but his thoughts were far away from the back parlour in Pall Mall.

It will be seen that there subsisted a considerable intimacy between these two men, so different. Circumstances had thrown them together, and an obligation due, with a generous mind, knits the debtor more firmly to the creditor. Thornhill knew all he had done for Palmer; and with all his penurious hardness the latter had never been unmindful of it. In fact, he went to Pall Mall that day with the intention of leaving his money to a Thornhill. He had ascertained sufficient for his purpose; and although he was prevented from announcing that purpose to Henry Thornhill, he had quite determined in his own mind that Charlie would be none the worse for his patronage and assistance. He liked what he had seen of him, and he had no particular wish that his wealth should go to replace an estate which was being, according to all accounts, rapidly dissipated. How little he knew of the use to which his money might some day be put the reader shall know hereafter, if his patience will carry him through the task he has commenced.

In the meantime, our hero has carried out his intention honestly enough. Charlie was reading hard. He was involved in the intricacies of that erudite and interesting history called "Chepmell," from which he ascertained the names of the heptarchy, the difference between Pitt and Lord Chatham, and the descent of our reigning monarch from James I of glorious memory. Euclid had already informed him that the square of the hypotenuse was equal to the squares of the other two sides of a right-angled triangle; but whether he was to add that it was "absurd" or not, he was not yet certain. He was making daily translations from M. Contanseau's extracts from Charles XII—the battle of Pultava and his doings among the Janissaries—as very likely to be set; and he had almost conquered the difficulty of "quantitative and qualitative" adjectives, and the meaning of a thing called "the objective case," from a modern Lindley Murray. The assistance he derived in all this from *Old* Armstrong, as that gallant captain was called, was but small: such as the unhappy victim of short whisk who never held a trump and played execrably, and nocturnal jorums of hot gin-and-water, might be expected to furnish. The Armstrong table was more substantial than *recherché*, and the ladies of the family were a moderate substitute for the pleasantries of Marston House, Lady Elizabeth, Mrs. Thornhill, and Mary Stanhope, or the charms of Edith Dacre and her sister. Mrs. Armstrong was a slatternly beauty of forty-five; Miss Arm-

strong was a pretty girl, adorned in many colours, who found everything "awfully jolly" or "hard lines," who sang manly songs, with a dash of the comic, made her own bonnets, painted scrolls for the curate of the parish, and was evidently destined for the first eligible spoon who was lucky enough to get an ensigny through her father's agency. The Cambridge man was a terrible disappointment. He had no knowledge of Newmarket, nor of the Fitzwilliam. He preferred beer and Cavenish to regalias and sherry and soda-water; and asked with considerable *naïveté* what Mr. Thornhill wanted with that huge can of cold water every morning. Charlie, however, had a strong will, and for some weeks made considerable progress in spite of all difficulties. He had his pleasures, too. Mary Stanhope's kindness had touched him nearly. He laughed at her fears for his health, but he accepted his favourite horse, and showed his appreciation of her liberality by riding him straight and well whenever he was fit to go. He had stuck to his first refusal to join his brother at Melton; but he treated resolution by a dinner and bed now and then at Gilsland, and he was not always back so early the next day as he promised himself. He set a capital example, not unaccompanied by precept, to his fellow-pupils, who held him in some respect, not only for his years, but for some preconceived notions of his *savoir vivre*. "Why the deuce don't you fellows read?" said he. "Old Armstrong swears you'll none of you get through the exam."

"He knows nothing about it; I don't believe he can construe this bit of Livy himself," said Craven, who had come from Eton, where, he admitted, that he had never opened a book or done a verse yet. Smith's time had been passed at the village public, making love to the Hebe of the tap-room, until Charlie Thornhill had laughed at his not very delicate amour, and made him understand that a roadside public was not quite the place for an old Harrovian. Marlborough and Cheltenham furnished each their quota; and the language of the representatives of these seminaries of polite learning had to be corrected by some very unmistakable hints from a gentleman not squeamish, I regret to say, as to an occasional oath, but what a just discrimination between what was wrong and what was low.

"What made you fellows tell such a falsehood to Armstrong about having been on the river to-day?" said Charlie. "You know you hadn't been near a boat." Charlie hated a lie, and seldom failed to show it.

"Oh, what *does* it signify? He's an old fool, and never knows anything about it," said one; whilst another hung his head, and said, "Why shouldn't one say the river as well as anything else?"

"Because," said Charlie, "though he's not very bright, he always treats us like gentlemen, and it's not pleasant to sit by and hear it."

"Well, it wasn't the right thing to do," said Smith.

"No, hanged if it was!" said Craven. "Let's tell him to-morrow we were over at Saddington, playing billiards. Hallo! there he goes, to a muffin-struggle with the Dragon," (this was Mrs. Armstrong); "he's going to have a rubber with the Doctor; let's have a lark. I shall do my work to-morrow. Cantabs will give us a coach, so I shall go and smoke a pipe."

This is a sample of the state of things under the lax discipline of the gallant captain, late of the H.E.I.C. There is, however, no doubt that he had much for which to thank Charlie Thornhill, who neither smoked pipes under his nose, laughed at his wife, chaffed his daughter, frequented the pot-house, cut prayers, or bullied him in any way. Before the winter he had worked a reformation which was manifest to so dense an intellect as the captain's; and Charlie was happy in believing that he knew something more than he did when he left Gresham's. He was a mark for the arrows of the young women of the neighbourhood, which caused him a little trouble at first, as he hated letter-writing and was not quite safe in his spelling. Miss Pilborough, the doctor's daughter, asked him to tea, on pink paper, and in the name of her mother. The rector, old Cureton, went the length of a dinner; and a neighbouring squireen, who had heard of his brother and remembered his father's death, left his own card and his wife's, with Mr. Thornhill's name in the corner and an intimation that there was breakfast and the hounds at Topham Scrubs on the following Monday. Charlie's horse was not fit, and Edith Dacre reigned supreme.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A CATASTROPHE.

"Prepare him early with instruction, and season his mind with the maxims of truth."

"AND who was the wife of Charles I, Mr. Thornhill?" said Captain Armstrong, as he sat with his book before him, superintending a sort of morning canter in English History.

"Edith Dacre," said Charlie. "Oh, no! I beg your pardon, Captain Armstrong. I mean—let me see—'pon my soul, I forget; but I was thinking of something else. How very stupid to be sure!"

"Charles was also engaged to Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII," said the captain, very gravely, reading from the book. "'Just before this marriage took place James I died, March, 1625.'"

"Of course—of course; I beg your pardon." And the lecture proceeded with no very satisfactory result, as far as Charlie was concerned. A reference to the book showed the captain that his pupil was wrong upon two or three points, of which he himself was not quite safe, as "that the area of a triangle was double its altitude with its base," and that "Edward II's widow was confined for life to the Castle of Gilsland." If the reader requires any explanation of an ignorance which is not uncommon either in teacher or pupil, he will find it in this case in the following note, which was at the very moment in our hero's left-hand waistcoat pocket. It had arrived that morning by post. It produced a greater sensation than the contents appear to warrant:--

"GILSLAND, TUESDAY MORNING.

"DEAR MR. THORNHILL,

"Mamma desires me to write, as she is much engaged, and ask whether you will give us the pleasure of your company from Friday till Monday next. The hounds meet at our cover on Saturday, and perhaps you can send your horse over on Friday morning. There is a stall at your service. My brother is here, as he is not yet gone to Berne. We hope you will be able to come.

"Yours very truly,

"EDITH DACRE."

Charlie had dined before at Gilsland, and slept there. He had been out hunting in his life often enough to have borne the news of the meet with equanimity: and Mr. Dacre's cover, though a sure find, was a very moderate one for sport. The fact is that this was the first time he had ever had a letter from Edith; and though difficult to extract much from it, in the way of great encouragement, he managed to pick out of it consolation enough to drive out all the effects of his previous day's reading. Finding himself unfit for serious work, he lit a cigar, and visited the stable. The Templar was fit, and his proper day was Thursday. It was early in the season; there was no sign of frost in the air, he countermanded the Thursday's meet, and ordered his horse to be sent on Friday in good time to Gilsland. So much for the effects of a little scented paper, and an invitation to dinner; and he gave up Stickborough gorse almost without a sigh.

"If Mrs. Armstrong and the captain will excuse me," said Charlie, at breakfast (and the Dragon was never so politely addressed by anyone else in the house), "I shall be away from to-day till Monday."

"We shall be very sorry to lose you, I'm sure, Mr. Thornhill," said she, with considerable *empressement*, and smirking at Matilda; "very sorry. I wonder where it is that Mr. Thornhill hides himself occasionally from Saturday till Monday?" An intelligent titter between the ladies, and a plodding, stoical indifference to everything but the dinner on the part of the gentlemen. Charlie, however, felt no bashfulness as he answered—

"Gilsland, Mrs. Armstrong; it's about eighteen miles from here."

"Gilsland—Gilsland—let me see," said the captain, rushing at once into the subject, and very much fuddled with a morning potation. "Why, that's where Edward I—no, II, was confined—no, it was his wife. We had it in our lecture the day before yesterday."

"Captain Armstrong," said the Dragon, quite shocked, "do you know what you're talking about?—Matilda, my dear." And the lady left the room.

There was a goodly party assembled at the Dacres' on Friday, at seven P.M.: a heavy divine; two fox-hunting squires and their wives; a foreign nobleman, who had a house in the neighbourhood for the winter; a dowager peeress; Mr. and

Lady Elizabeth Montague Mastodon ; Mr. Robinson Brown, junior ; Mr. De Beauvoir, and Charlie Thornhill. A very meritorious impression has gone abroad that horse-flesh is *never* a subject of conversation before the claret appears. Our old acquaintance Nimrod assures us that at Melton, after that brilliant run which was honoured with a niche in the "Quarterly," the subject of hunting was not once mentioned during dinner. This is a simple misconception of the rules of good society, where people usually talk, as they eat and drink, of the things that please them best. Beer was not excluded from the table at Gilsland, nor was hunting a proscribed guest. The divine had his say on the subject of tithe commutation and the church-rate, into the former of which Mr. Mastodon introduced the hop-duty, and into the latter an educational scheme of his own. The dowager peeress started Paris, in pity to the foreigner, who was not well-up in English politics, and which all joined in hustling about till they got to the fashions. Here the squires pulled up, and their wives took up the running. Charlie had not said much, for, having got next to Edith, and opposite to Alice, he satisfied himself with thinking. Edith never talked quite so much to Charlie as to other people ; and Robinson Brown ran away with the conversation on the other side of her completely. Alice and De Beauvoir were discussing the charms of a certain picture by Millais ; in which the gentleman fondly insinuated a certain resemblance to the principal figure, but which Miss Dacre as strongly repudiated, with very good reason.

"That's no compliment, Mr. De Beauvoir ; the woman looks as if she had been pressed in a mangle, and then ironed to get out the creases ; and I hope you don't consider my hair bright red ?"

And she turned and looked at her admirer with a frank and open gaze, that assured Charlie, if he ever had any fears for Tom's chance against that gentleman. For he had lately discovered that Tuftenham, like all other male gossips, always arrived at some wrong conclusion ; and that it was Alice, and not Edith, who was the "pretty sister" whom De Beauvoir affected, and not the young lady about whom he had so inconsiderately made himself uncomfortable. De Beauvoir had risen in his estimation since the discovery, and Robinson Brown was the person of whom, with much justice, he always spoke as "that ass." That ass was basking in sunshine at the present moment,

and not grazing by any means on thistles. He drank, too, as they are said to do, of the sweetest water, and was well-nigh intoxicating himself. For Edith Dacre had a charming manner—so lively, so free, so unconsciously coquettish and unaffected, that a wiser man than Mr. Robinson Brown might have calculated on conquest. If Charlie had known the world as well as he afterwards learnt it, he might have considered it a good sign that he was an exception to this rule; that she lost her lightness, and assumed a gravity which she was catching unconsciously from him. “Dear Jane,” however, was the greatest fool alive, and no wonder it was taken in.

“Iron,” said Lady Elizabeth, who had too much sense ever to be above the shop, “demand for iron, of course there must be; as traffic increases, and population in large towns becomes denser, and gold flows in from these newly-found regions of which we hear so much, of course they’ll want iron. We shall have an iron age again, Mr. Sylvester.”

“And a golden one,” said the gentleman, who seldom perpetrated a *bon mot*; “no more war—nothing but peace and plenty; that’s a little against iron, my lady.”

“Peace! bless my heart! there’ll be more war than ever. When people grow fast and rich, they kick, and then others kick again. Poor people go to war, sir? Oh, no. Where’s the money to come from? Nobody goes to war without metal, you know.”

And here Sylvester looked so puzzled at Mr. Dacre’s “Bravo! Lady Elizabeth!” that, had he not been relieved by Sir Thomas Fallowtop, I can’t say how long she would have been without a reply. The baronet, however, had a grievance. Iron had entered into his soul, and now was the time to relieve himself.

“I know that the consumption of metal must be much greater than formerly,” said the plethoric baronet, with much dignity, “though I presume it has not become dearer through the increased demand: for the farmers all round our country have taken to use it for fencing, and it’s a most dangerous obstacle to crossing a country. Something must be done by the legislature. You ruin this country as soon as you put an end to fox-hunting.” The old gentleman looked for a second.

“Of course—most undoubtedly—very, vewy true,” said Robinson Brown. “Tewwible thing indeed; awistocwacy’s pleasures, and that sort of thing, eh, Miss Dacre?”

“I hope, Sir Thomas, that we shan’t go into your country to-

morrow then, for I am going out with the hounds. I've often been promised, and at last I am really going on horseback. I'm going to jump, too—ain't I, Teddy?"

"The mare's a capital fencer," said Teddy Dacre, "but she's rather troublesome to ride, Edith has some peculiar opinions about gentlemen's hands, and she has insisted upon showing us how to ride to-morrow. Mind your neck, Charlie!"

Charlie thought of somebody else's neck, and only said—

"I don't think you ought to let your sister ride that mare, unless she's quieter than when I saw her."

"Oh, how provoking you are, Mr. Thornhill! Mamma and papa set such value on my neck and your opinion about horses, that if you say much more I shan't go at all."

Charlie held his tongue, which he found easier than talking; but he made up his mind to ascertain all about the mare, and act accordingly. He thought Alice might help him in the drawing-room.

An hour later, Mr. Dacre shook the hand of his last retiring guest, adding, "Good night! We shall draw our covers first, and if we get a run, well and good; if not, our second find will be Fallowtops, notwithstanding the iron fences, which have half-spoilt the riding, and ought to be put a stop to by the landlords: they are the only people to do it, and not by abuse, but remonstrance."

On a return to the drawing-room, the riding expedition of the next day was the topic of general conversation. The general feeling was against the qualifications of the mare for carrying the lady; but Teddy Dacre laughed at the notion, and Edith declared she could ride her, had ridden her, and would ride her; and Edith was a bit of a tyrant, and her word on her own business had long been law. Mr. Robinson Brown offered a substitute, and proposed to take the mare himself; but Miss Edith declared that his mother and sisters would never forgive her if anything happened to him, and he had better reserve himself for his match with Mr. Thornhill. "Dear Jane" was accustomed to be treated with deference at home, and did not understand young ladies' chaff. Charlie had nothing to offer, as his own horse was quite unfit for any lady to ride.

"Oh! I should not care about you, you know, Mr. Thornhill; but the fact is, that I mean to ride the mare. Papa means to go with us on a hack, and I dare say you'll be good-natured enough to keep an eye upon us." Charlie went up to blood-heat,

Fahrenheit. "Mamma would feel better satisfied." He was down at 32°. Before bedtime, however, Alice had made him a participator, to a certain extent, in her own fears.

"The mare is very hot with the hounds," said she, "and, though Edith rides very well, she has a great deal more courage than experience."

"Then I won't be far away," said he, and the ladies went to bed.

There have been such things as hunt breakfasts described before this. I believe I know all about the breeches and boots, the neckerchiefs, and the cut of the pink, which has descended from the dignity of the old-fashioned swallow-tail through gradations of wide-skirted riding-coats, frock-coats and shooting-jackets, to the present comfortably-fitting and truly useful morning coat, thick, warm, strong, and easy. But no sooner do I get among the pork-pie hats and the flyaway turbans, the pheasant breasts and partridge wings, the pilot spencers and velvet bodies, the short habits and curious nether garments of the Amazon of 1862, than I lose myself altogether, and become a miserable peg for envious critics to hang their gibes upon. Suffice it to say that Charlie appeared the perfection of an English sportsman, having assumed for the time a coat of modest black, as the garb best fitted for his present *status pupillaris*; and Edith took her seat in a very proper habit befitting her intentions, and that chimney-pot which, with all the vagaries of modern taste, continues to be the head-dress of the most correct portion of our female equestrians.

By eleven o'clock the hounds, and servants with their master's horses; a score of second horsemen; farmers of every grade, shape, age, and character; two hard-riding doctors (they always are so); a first-flight parson; and about fifty county gentlemen, who had partaken, or declined to partake, of Mr. Dacre's morning hospitality, were assembled in the field on the other side of the sunk fence. Opposite the door of the house, grooms were leading the horses of those who prolonged their morning meal. There was Mr. Dacre's favourite hack, a neat-looking animal enough, fit to carry a thin gentlemanly old man such as he. There was Robinson Brown's three-hundred-guinea Irish Birdcatcher horse, all that size and length, length of tooth included, could make him. Even now Edith ought to have changed her mind and the groom the saddles. There was a good, useful, not very expensive hunter for Teddy Dacre himself,

and the mare, which switched her narrow, blood-like quarters and clean-made thighs and hocks with her tail, now and then putting back her ears and striking with one leg ; and there was Charlie's young one, Mary Stanhope's present—Aunt Mary, who was determined to make him idle if possible—a raw, lengthy, slack-looking horse, but with large limbs, good shoulders, and great depth. His fault lay behind the saddle ; but there was time as well as room for improvement there.

“Where to, Dacre ?” said the Master, throwing himself into his saddle, and giving at the same time an order to his huntsman.

“Yes, sir,” replied that functionary, touching his cap, “there's a fox lies down by the osiers, close against the river.” And away went the huntsman in the midst of his hounds, preceded by one whip and followed by another, towards the supposed fox-kennel.

After drawing two or three spinneys on the road, blank, giving an opportunity to Charlie to superintend his charge, whose mare fidgeted about considerably, and had relieved her mistress of Robinson Brown's attendance by kicking the Bird-catcher horse above the hock, they approached the osier-bed. It was bounded by the river on one side, the upper part of it being dry lying, of blackthorn, at the end of which was a strong, almost impracticable, fence, into a small meadow. At this end of the cover it was desirable that the crowd should assemble, and the hounds were brought round and thrown in there, as the best chance of affording a run. Charlie had taken his place at a corner of the cover indicated. He had scarcely forgotten Edith for a moment until now, when eyes and ears were straining for the hoped-for “gone away.” The young lady, with more modesty than that exhibited by modern Amazons, had turned her horse back, and, walking along the hedgerow, had ridden through a gate into the meadow itself, partly to quiet her horse and partly to be out of the way. For a few minutes it had the desired effect, but almost immediately the hounds found ; a crash of melody ensued ; the rate of the whips, the cheer of the huntsman, or the sudden rush of horsemen to some favoured spot, again upset the mare. At this moment, standing in his stirrups, and straining his eyes to catch sight of fox, or hounds, or anything but Edith Dacre, she recurred to his mind. He had seen her go back, and now, looking towards the meadow, through the fence, what was his distress to see the mare rearing

and plunging wildly, as at every fresh bound she neared the river, swollen by autumnal rains. Edith kept her seat and her presence of mind, but she was deadly pale, and evidently her strength was going. A fresh blast of the horn and a "tally-ho back" brought more horses up at a hand gallop; the mare seized the bit in her teeth, and plunged madly towards the river's brink. And now everybody saw the danger and the impracticable nature of the fence, and galloped, Robinson Brown leading, towards the gate, some two hundred yards up the hedgerow. Almost as they started a terrible shriek broke on the ear; the mare reared bolt upright; the poor girl caught tight hold of the curb-rein, and in an instant more they both fell with a crash into the river. The mare extricated herself immediately; but there, on the waters, floated rapidly down stream the dark habit and brown tresses of that beautiful girl.

Charlie had quite forgotten the fox as soon as he perceived her situation on the bank; he hesitated only to calculate the possibility of clearing the fence, or of getting to the gate most quickly. The last scream and violent plunge of the mare decided the matter. His horse was raw, but fresh and resolute; the rails were strong, the fence pretty thick, but it allowed the pleasing vision of a broad black ditch, and a second flight of timber on the other side. Catching hold of the reins in a grasp of iron, and sending both spurs into his horse's flanks, he rushed him at it. The result might be guessed: as Edith Dacre and the mare rolled off the bank into the water, Charlie Thornhill and his horse landed with a loud crash into the second flight of rails, which proved just strong enough to let them through, but with a heavy fall on the other side.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

"Strong reasons make strong actions."—*King John*.

CHARLIE, amongst other accomplishments, had learned to fall well. He was seldom seen running after his horse, over a ploughed field, with tearful entreaties to his friends to "tie him

up at the next gate." He never let go the reins, as long as they remained unbroken, or was caught ignominiously endeavouring to soothe the cunning steed, who stands mildly grazing after having given his rider a fall that shakes every bone in his body, and leaves him with scattered limbs and senses to deplore his too-confiding reliance on a brute. The consequence was, that almost before he was down, he was up again ; and with one short but heartfelt thanksgiving that *he* was not at this moment disabled, he dropped the reins which by instinct he held, and giving himself one shake, and one moment for reflection, he ran towards the river to a point somewhat below that at which Edith Dacre had just risen to the surface. He saw she was free from her horse, and that it was only a question of how long it would take to saturate her heavy riding habit. As to assistance from the rest, they were at this moment unhasping the gate which had closed again, and were some three hundred yards from the spot. Scarcely thirty yards separated him from the object he loved best on earth, or in the water, and in a second or two he was at the river's brink. In two or three vigorous strokes he was alongside of Edith, and bearing her rapidly towards the angle formed by the fence and the osier bed, where landing seemed easier than elsewhere. By the time he reached the spot, Robinson Brown, Sir Thomas Fallowtop, Mr. Dacre, pale as ashes, but covering his emotion with an assumed calmness, two young farmers, who had been waiting, out of the crowd, with young horses, and about half a dozen labouring men and boys, were ready to give a hand or advice, as the case might be. Charlie accepted the former and disdained the latter. Edith had already recovered in some sort her consciousness, and was pouring out thanks, with eyes that told too truly how glad she was to be indebted to her deliverer. She clung to him, as he held her for one moment to his heart, and the next was in the arms of her father. He uttered not one word, but he looked conscious of the narrowness of her escape, and gave one short but sincere pressure of the hand to Charlie, which assured him that his share in the transaction was not forgotten. It is but justice to the field to say, that they were now about a mile from the cover in an opposite direction, the fox having broken at the very moment that Charlie charged the fence. According to received opinion, great men are in the habit of fixing their minds upon the business they are engaged in ; and there is no doubt that a whole family might be drowned without exciting

much surprise, or turning some men from the object they have in view. It is not therefore wonderful that Charlie should have been permitted the achievement of the present adventure without any interruption from the crowd, or any participator in his pleasure.

I have no doubt that, should the critics do me the honour of noticing me some day or other, that they will not fail to point out the fortunate escape from drowning which has hitherto attended the Dacre family. What they may be inclined to predict of Mr. Edward Dacre's end, I can hardly say, beyond that he was not born to be drowned; a lady, I presume, will escape comment of that kind; but that an author should venture upon making his hero neither more nor less than a sort of rational Newfoundland, who lays claim to his mistress's gratitude, as much as her love, by his physical capability and his knowledge of swimming, shows a dearth of invention or imagination which ought to have restricted his pen to the narration of facts. But why should not two persons in one family have the misfortune to be nearly drowned? If such a thing were impossible, or even very uncommon, what a charming immunity for the young ladies would it be, that their brother should be the scapegoat; and that the girls should be born to a sort of immortality, because the boys of a family had broken every bone in each individual body. I might have written something infinitely more improbable. I might have followed this author into the most mysterious depths of electro-biology, or that into the superstitions of another world, with the most perfect safety. But that two members of the same family should have escaped drowning by the same instrument or agent, will appear incredible; and be branded, I fear, by the critics, as an absurdity beneath contempt.

But while I have been wandering, Edith Dacre has been left dripping in her wet clothes and wringing locks, now in the arms of her father, and anon recomposing an extemporaneous toilette, which had been deranged by the recent immersion in the Floss. Ridicule is the greatest enemy to love. Nothing is so trying as an absurd position; but Charlie could see nothing to laugh at in so providential an escape, notwithstanding that a water nymph in a riding-habit, and neat little Wellington boots, is provocative of some mirth. At another time, and under other circumstances, he might have found amusement in a *contre-temps* which had deprived a young woman of her hat, and

brought down all her back hair, dripping with water. At present, his object was shelter and warmth for the poor girl, who had nearly fallen a victim to no unfeminine hardihood of her own, but to the unintentional thoughtlessness of her brother. I have seen ladies floating about in the water, self-immolated at the shrine of St. Hubert, but who were desirous of being considered upon all occasions pre-eminently capable of taking care of themselves.

Edith continued to shiver and shake, as well she might; and it became a question of how to get her home. At this juncture up came a groom of Mr. Dacre's, who had been left behind, at the house, in consequence of the increased number of guests, but who ought to have reached the cover earlier. It was suggested that he should ride Miss Dacre's mare, and that she should ride his horse; an arrangement easily made and equally agreeable to all parties, in the absence of a carriage, or any road to drive one. The saddles were changed, and more dead than alive she was lifted on the groom's horse, fortunately a very quiet one. Charlie, as soon as the lady was in her saddle, declaring her capability to proceed, and the utter absence of any ill but that of fright and wet, made an inconvenient discovery for himself. His horse was lame: he had struck himself violently on the fetlock in his fall, and the standing still had given the joint time to become very stiff and painful. The next thing, therefore, was to displace the groom, which was done accordingly; in spite of Edith's appeals, not to get on the mare, which were not the less tender for their sincerity, Charlie mounted the offender. He had but two regrets, that he had lost the run, and that Robinson Brown was escorting them home. It was a mixed feeling, but the last was by far the stronger of the two.

Gilsland was about two miles from the osier-bed; and as Edith had begun to shake off her faintness, after the sherry which had been forced upon her by the appeals of her father, and by the fortunate provision of Charlie's flask, it was proposed to jog on, as a means of keeping both Edith and Charlie from the effects of their ducking. In this manner they arrived at the Hall, and at once relieved Mrs. Dacre and Alice from any fears which an unprejudiced imagination is apt to attribute to a too early return from hunting, especially when accompanied by such a development of back hair. The young lady was dismissed to her room, where her mother, sister, and two maids

insisted upon administering to her comforts, when she would fain—oh! how fain!—have been alone, with herself and her thoughts. For she had thanks due to One whom neither her father nor Charlie had quite forgotten at the moment, and in her gratitude to the instrument, she could not help reverting to the cause.

Mrs. Dacre's first idea was the true one, that Charlie and Edith had been in the water together; and she knew that was often a prelude to other misfortunes. She was very fond of Charlie, but she did not like the idea of him for a husband for one of her children. They might look higher. Then she detected herself making a compromise, and permitting herself and her family the friendship of a detrimental. There was a plausible excuse for that to the world; and Mrs. Dacre's world wanted an apology for an imprudent marriage more than that world where there will be none at all. She found herself thinking more about Charlie's uncle, his fortune, its extent, and his life. These are what she called his prospects: the fact is they were her own. Robinson Brown she could not endure; but she rather thought that it would be her duty to put up with a young man of such immense expectations, and who had certainly attracted the attention of several judicious ladies of even higher *ton* than herself. Alice had long suspected the state of Charlie's heart; she liked him, for himself, and the debt of gratitude she owed him for a brother and a sister, in all probability would not remain the strongest link that tied them together for any very long time. She was sincerely glad of this, for she foresaw the solution of the Gordian knot of *convenance* cut by the preference he might claim for such unequalled services. Mr. Dacre was an easy person, not given to emotion, excepting in very unexpected circumstances, such as we have detailed. He wrung Charlie's hand, as we have seen; wished he could provide for him (abroad perhaps!) and determined upon lending him the mare, or one of his own horses, until his own should be sound enough for him to ride. He need not want a general invitation to Gilsland: *cela va sans dire*.

During the day the village Esculapius, Dr. Torrens, called. Nothing could be better than the young lady: "quiet; something light for dinner; a little soda-water, no wine, and the doctor would call again to-morrow." Doctor! thought Charlie, what in the name of fortune does the doctor want here? surely there's nothing the matter. Then came the curate: he returned

to his duties without being introduced. Charlie hoped he was not coming on the morrow too. And then a message from the farm, to hope the young lady was not hurt. The answer was satisfactory enough. At that moment Mr. Robinson Brown, who had also been disappointed of his day's hunting, without, however, the satisfaction which accompanied Charlie's disappointment, lounged into the room. Robinson Brown dabbled in polite literature, as he imagined, so he picked up a magazine, whilst Charlie looked out of the window, struggling to get the better of a rather bad fit of the spleen. Alice was with her sister ; and she was his only sedative in the house. The fact is that love, of which he had taken a strong dose, did not agree with Charlie's temper.

"Why, Thornhill, I thought you were gone to Van Diemen's Land, or Heligoland, or some land or other in Africa. I was quite agreeably surprised to see you yesterday at dinner," said Mr. Brown, with a comfortable kind of patronage in his tone.

"No, not yet. When do you go?" rejoined the other, rather tartly.

"Gwacious ! what a fellow you are ! Why should *I* go to those outlandish places ? I don't want to be eaten alive, my dear fellow," said the cornet.

"Oh ! nobody'll eat you alive."

"I don't know : 'pon my soul I don't know about that. I'm not so tough as you think for, Thornhill." He was soft enough, to do him justice.

"No ; but a man may be very soft, and yet disagree with a fellow," rejoined Charlie ; and, having delivered himself of this sentiment, he turned again to the window. He was not fated to enjoy his repose long, for he was once more interrupted by the Plunger.

"You're weeding, eh, Thornhill ? weeding, I understand ; and that sort of thing ?"

"What ? a garden or a stud ? I've weeded the latter pretty closely."

"No no ; not weeding, but weeding," said dear Jane : "weeding with a coach, you know." He made rather a violent struggle to make himself comprehensible.

"Yes ; I am reading for a commission," replied Charlie, turning once more to the contemplation of the black clouds, which portended a wet ride home for the sportsmen.

"Aw—aw—yes—great baw weeding, to some fellows. Now

we never had any examination, or that sort of thing, when I went into the service ; nothing of the kind," persevered Robinson Brown.

"So I should think," said Charlie, who saw it would be polite to say something.

"Our fellows are aw—aw—so ignowant : not bad fellows, you know, but so infernally ignowant."

"So I should have imagined," replied Charlie once more, who was watching a figure intently which appeared at the further end of the shrubbery, and which exhibited every appearance of one of the ladies of the house walking briskly to and fro. "So I should have imagined."

"Oh ! you know our fellows, then. Do you ever dine at the mess ? Bad cook ; and altogether—aw—aw—that sort of thing. Do you know Carnaby ?"

"No ; I only know you." And just as Robinson Brown was recommencing on some other subject, Charlie, feigning an unexpected reminiscence, rushed out of the room in search of the shawl, which had once more disappeared round the shrubbery. It was Alice Dacre.

Charlie was not a bold man ; and there was no one in the house at that time, excepting, perhaps, Lady Elizabeth, to avoid whom he would not have gone a mile round. But as soon as he saw that it was Alice Dacre he testified an invincible desire for news of Edith. What more natural ? says the reader. What more proper ? say I. And yet, from the moment it occurred to him, it seemed to possess insuperable objections. It took a long time to come to the point ; and then it is doubtful whether the attractions of Alice would have sufficed to draw him out, but for the repulsion of Mr. Robinson Brown.

"What a morning it has been for us, Mr. Thornhill," began Alice, who exhibited very recent traces of tears, which did not escape the discriminating eyes of Charlie. "Poor Edith ! it has been too much for her : and now that the excitement is over, the reaction is very painful. And what do we not owe you ?"

"Don't let that burden you, Miss Dacre."

"It does not burden us ; but——" And here poor Alice blushed, for she knew one whom it did burden painfully, and another she guessed at, who hugged her burden closer than was good for her. Alice Dacre was very thoughtful for others. "Oh ! Mr. Thornhill, I could say so much. If you knew how we have lived together, and what a blessing you have restored to

us all by your courage ;” and here a good large pearl did run over. But she soon brightened again, for she saw that the conversation was painful to Charlie, who was not inclined to magnify his own exploit, though he was not blind to the danger of the girl.

Alice felt a strong inclination to ask after his brother ; but as the words rose they stuck ; and she only asked him where he was going to spend his winter.

“ I scarcely know ; I presume at Thornhills. But, you know, I am reading, and must work hard at Scampersdale ; for I hope to have a commission before long.” Charlie wondered where he was likely to be quartered.

“ Yes, we heard of that ; but you did talk of going to Melton.”

“ I did ; but I have not time. What hunting I do I must do in this neighbourhood. However, I must be a prisoner for a fortnight or more. I lamed my horse.”

“ And papa proposes to send over one of his, or the mare Edith rode to-day, if you think her worth riding.”

“ I hope we shall see Edith at dinner,” said Charlie.

“ No, not at dinner to-day. To-morrow Dr. Torrens proposes calling early ; and I hope she will be much better. But, tell me, when does the steeple-chase between your brother’s horse and Mr. Robinson Brown’s Reluctance come off ? Edith will want all the news.”

“ Not immediately ; it’s postponed. And as I am to ride, I should like to have got through my literary difficulties before I risk your sister’s gloves ; for I know she has backed the horse. But,” added he, encouragingly, “ I think we can manage to win.”

“ I hope so ; or poor Edith will be ruined in gloves. I heard her backing you to her last penny ; so I beg you win.”

“ Shall we see her at dinner to-day ? You fear not. But is anything the matter ? Tell me, tell me, Miss Dacre.” And here, seeing how far his feelings had carried him away, he became suddenly cold, and hoped it was nothing but fatigue. “ Had they much opinion of their doctor ?”

“ Oh ! yes ; certainly. He was to see Edith to-morrow ; and if she had a good night she would be better, no doubt.” And with this Charlie was obliged to be satisfied.

But the next morning Edith was much the same. She was to lie in bed and to keep her room throughout the day. The excitement had been too much for her.

Sickness in a house full of guests is always very depressing.

Nobody seems to know what to do. There is a vague listlessness about the visitors, and the most nearly interested have time for nothing. There is a constant energy pervades them all. Breakfast is a scurry; luncheon is not cheerful, and wants the plans and the proposals of a healthy time; as to dinner, you have to sit down with a vacant chair or two. Then one drops in, then another; everyone has come from the sick-chamber. You feel your insignificance and uselessness. You can do nothing, and are plainly *de trop*. Under these circumstances was the party at Gilsland. So on the Monday morning Charlie returned to work; but he had the happiness of seeing Mr. Robinson Brown depart before him, a woe-begone object of simulated tenderness. He assumed that hangdog style as a privilege; and Charlie did not know well what to do with himself where, in proportion to the tenderness of his feelings, he was compelled to appear the least interested of any. Robinson Brown, however, once gone, he started for Captain Armstrong's with allayed temper and relieved mind.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LIFE IN THE SHIRES.

"Things sweet to taste prove in digestion sour."—*Richard II.*

CHARLIE found himself at Captain Armstrong's, once more involved in the intricacies of English spelling, French dictation, the square root, and simple equations; and why called simple he had some difficulty in understanding. He had received a note from Alice Dacre three days later, which gave but a very poor account of Edith's recovery; and when he rode over on Saturday morning to inquire after her, ostensibly to see his young horse, it was impossible to conceal the fact of very severe illness. In truth, she was attacked by low fever, the result of cold and excitement combined; and a summons for a more reliable opinion than that of Dr. Torrens confirmed Charlie's fears of considerable danger. During three weeks of much suffering, alternating between life and death, he was as little able to pursue any efficient study almost as she would have been; and it was

not till the fourth week that his mind was made easy by an assurance, on a repeated visit, that all danger was completely over, and that beef-tea and champagne were doing the work of the doctor in curing, not in killing, as might be supposed.

Leaving Edith to get well, and Charlie to recover his lost ground, I take this opportunity for a reflection or two, which the reader can miss, if he likes, but which is as much the necessary ingredient of a novel as pepper of a rabbit-pie. Indeed, a novel which deals in characters, facts, or fictions, as the case may be, and nothing else, is not unlike one of those excellent Strasbourg patés from which nothing has been omitted but the truffles and the seasoning. And though I have no doubt it would be swallowed, if fashion gave the word, as many a novel is read, without a syllable to give it flavour beyond its details, I cannot imagine that persons of real taste would approve it.

It will have been observed that Edith Dacre was a lively, cheerful, high-spirited girl, with some little vanity and love of display, but many lovable qualities. Her anxiety to ride an unruly mare arose partly from this circumstance and partly from sheer animal spirits. A good ducking would have been sufficient punishment, if any were thought necessary; but a fever, which reduced her to a skeleton, frightened her family, nearly killed her lover with anxiety, and deprived her for a time of a valuable head of hair, seems to have been more than adequate. What shall we say of the young ladies of the present day, who are not satisfied with a modest exhibition of themselves at the cover side, but who are either so desirous of display, or so wedded to the charms of manly exercise, as to pride themselves upon the successful negotiation of stiff timber or fourteen feet of water? whose conversation has become a mixture of the stable and the school-room, and whose fantastic dress ranges between the collars and pea-jacket of a Whitechapel gent and the picturesque conventionalities of a ropedancer? What is the reason of all this? Who or what are the ladies who have introduced this *furor e cavalleresco* the most lovely, the most delicate, the most woman-like of the women of this world? Alas? "how are the mighty fallen," and the insignificant exalted! Who ever heard of them thirty years ago, save at some unholy Bacchanalian festival? Were their names, or abodes, or calling the subject of conversation to our mothers? Who were the men who within the last thirty years kissed the tips of their fingers to mysterious broughams in the presence of mothers, sisters, or the women destined to be

their wives? Who are to regenerate the men of this wicked world but the women? And are they to do it by winking at their follies and applauding in public their unrefined inclinations? Is it to be done by jokes, innuendos, and *double entendres*, and a levity which takes for its subject the most sacred relation between man and woman, to hold it up to derision, or to deny its sanctity? "Pretty horsebreakers," forsooth! Pretty hearth and hope breakers! If men and women agreed to call things by their right names, we *could* hear but little of them from woman's lips. For "*quod fœdum est factu, idem est turpe dictu.*" In the general silence proclamatory of their condemnation they would lose their effrontery; and what asks for toleration secretly would cease to be talked about openly. Now they have excited a curiosity which is neither seemly nor useful: public print-shops are decorated with their portraits; photography hands down their turpitude to a still more vicious generation; their carriages are known, their horses are coveted, their opera-boxes are the objects of *lorgnettes* from every side, and impunity and observation stamp their effrontery with the seal of fashion. That society, which, in the vindication of its rights and virtue, refuses its hand to one who has erred, but who has retrieved her position, as far as may be, by marriage and a life of modest utility, sanctions luxurious youth in the prosecution of vice, and gives to the most immodest declaration of unchastity a charm which is denied to suffering virtue or newly adopted respectability. Yes! reader, you who hate sentimentality may not be averse to decency and truth. Miss it, if you will, and go on with the story: but if you care about the honour and spotless purity of your own women, the women of your own hearth and country, read it, and lay it to your heart.

And what of Tom Thornhill all this time? He was at it, body and soul. A dozen horses at Melton; a house that befitted his ample means; and companions that drank deep of the cup in which he pledged them. There was nothing but pleasure before him, and he revelled in the prospect. And in that prospect was one form which enhanced the beauty of the picture, and stood out part and parcel of a grand and striking foreground. Alice Dacre, with her glossy hair, and soft black eyes, and truthful serenity—not severity. Of that there was none. There was force and character, but without one drawback. Yes, one. Alice was too confident of her own discernment; and when men did not turn out what she, in her own mind, had made them, she

was disappointed, and failed to see the good in them which her unprejudiced opinion might have done. But there she stood in Tom Thornhill's picture of future happiness, bright and glorious, for whom he would have sacrificed himself, but not all ; not his passion, his devourer, his god. He could—strange infatuation !—have thrown his thousands into the sea for her sake, and turned on his heel a beggar with Alice by his side ; but he could not relinquish the thousands of other people, to bask for ever in the sunshine of her love. Did he know this ? did he ask his conscience if it were so ? And what answer would it have returned ?

The fact is, Tom Thornhill had too much to do to ask his conscience anything ; and his conscience was becoming of that hard cut-and-dried character, as to be almost shy of answering anything in its former straightforward manner. It had got a fine polish on it ; and, instead of the roughness of inherent truth, it gave nothing more than the reflection of him who looked into it. It was very like a looking-glass, and would have answered flatteringly enough. What a comfortable life it was to be sure, and how it tended to give elasticity to the morals, and compression to philanthropy ? Breakfast at — ; bless me, where are the hounds to-morrow ? Grilled bones, devilled kidneys, a boar's head, and a very well prepared *réchauffé* of fish ! A gallop or phaeton to Ranksborough, Kirby Gate, Six Hills, or Great Glen ! The cheerful greetings on the road, or at the cover side ; and the cigar, so pleasant in the still sullen air of a November morning. And then the day's work : the rattling burst of twenty minutes ; the cooler hunting over a cold plough, where every hound has to hold his own, and where the quickly-breathing horses that have gone the run may catch their wind, or be handed over to the second horseman, who has waited for the nick. The afternoon fox, so often proving a straight one ; when the eagerness of the too impetuous sportsman has had time to cool ; when hounds are not pressed by a too willing field ; and when the true workman finds the value of his morning's self-denial. All these things Tom was enjoying in their veriest perfection. Who had better horses than Thornhill ? Nobody. Who rode them straighter ? Nobody. Who had a better cook, a better cellar, a better digestion ? Who was a luckier fellow than he ? *Halte-là !* Had he satisfied himself with this, who should have said me " nay " ? But there were other pleasures not so cheerful, not so innocent, not so happy in their termination.

A good table is one of the essentials of a gentleman. I do not know that a gentleman enjoys a good dinner more than other people; frequently his own tastes are simple in the extreme. Soup, fish, grouse, and a cabinet pudding, a glass or two of Burgundy, and a bottle of claret, is a dinner for a prince. Some like a haunch of venison, others one slice from a roast leg of mutton; but it does not behove a man of fashion to forget that his friends may have a more discriminating taste than his own. But a few thousands a year go a great way in the pleasures of sense. There is but one thing that no fortune can resist: the gaming-table. Tom loved play, and he loved to play high. Hitherto he had had but few opportunities of indulging his passion to any great extent—in private. He had backed horses, however, with a recklessness that was the result of strong prejudice or ignorance, and had already suffered. At this game he stood no chance of winning, excepting by accident. He was always playing a game which they with whom he played knew better than himself. He betted as honestly, and paid as readily, and with the same good humour, as he did everything. But he did not always get paid; so that, like the zero, *cæteris paribus*, there was an eternal pull against him. He had already been raising money; and it was clear that in a few years he must be in the hands of the Jews. That scattered but worm-gathering people had their eyes upon him, as one of their daintiest morsels. They had tried Lord Carlingford, and found him unripe for their gathering; the Punter was not worth the trouble. Cressingham paid too regularly; when he wanted money, there were no renewals, no bonds; they saw no fish so ready to take the bait as Tom Thornhill. Already they counted their 60 per cent., and something tangible—Thornhills—to fall back upon.

The antecedents of Wilson Graves were not good. We know that in the tragedy of Fred Ludlow he played an ugly part: but he was always well received in society, and the stain rested only on his name, not on his company. Besides, had he not a good prospective property from his uncle, Lord Slangsbury? And what will not that cover? A multitude of his own sins, if none of anybody else's. About this time he arrived in the Quorn country, with a stud of weight-carrying horses which would have entitled him to some respect, if nothing else would do so. He had never been intimate with the Thornhills. He was not exactly in the same set; but he

was not easily passed over in the company of hard-riding and hard-drinking men who came together, after a good day's sport, round Thornhill's table.

"Who was that we left swimming about in the Whissendine to-day with our second fox?" asked Captain Charteris of Lord Carlingford, as they sat in Thornhill's drawing-room in their hunting things before a roasting fire, with no other light but its ruddy and cheerful blaze. "He looked to me as if he stood a good chance of being drowned."

"Only Wilson Graves," said his lordship; "he went very well up to that. But I could see his horse didn't mean to have the water; he became exceedingly shifty as soon as he caught sight of it, and I heard him go in just as I landed with a desperate scramble; and when I looked round, I saw nothing but a hat and one top-boot above the water; I presume they belonged to him. I suppose he got out?"

"Yes," said Charteris; "I pulled up a moment, and he scrambled to the bank. The water was not above four feet and a half deep there, so he was perfectly safe. Is he the man that broke the bank at Homburg the year before last, and got out of window with twenty thousand dollars from a Broadway billiard-room, whilst the indignant Yankee was sharpening his bowie-knife at the bottom of the stairs?"

"So they say," rejoined Lord Carlingford; "he gave Langton five-and-twenty pounds to toss him up for five hundred, one night, at the door of his own house—by the hall-lamp—and won. Langton did not want to toss; but he thought the odds justified him in accepting the challenge; and when he turned round, there was nobody there to hedge."

"Perhaps he'll make you the same offer to-night," said Tom Thornhill, who had just come in from the stable; "he's coming to dinner to-day. I've given him a bed, as he hunts on this side to-morrow; and it saves him a ride back to Leicester. Not a bad thing to-day; and that new horse of Joe Anderson's carried me very well."

"He's a thoroughbred one, is he not?"

"Yes, quite; and that's what makes him so good through dirt; if they have but limbs there's nothing like them in difficulties."

"By-the-bye, Thornhill, has anything more been done about the match between your brown horse and Robinson Brown's mare? It ought to be coming off soon."

"It's postponed by agreement for another month. Charlie thinks he shall ride so much *lighter* when his examination is over, and Robinson Brown's mare wasn't fit, I believe. So he wanted to have it later in the season."

"I think 12 st. is always 12 st., examination or not; and I shouldn't have postponed it. I suppose your horse is fit." Thus spake Captain Charteris, who no doubt was quite right, and whose sagacity will be applauded by the racing men and betting fraternity in general. In fact, as Wilson Graves that day explained at table, it was very doubtful whether Thornhill had any right to postpone the match, as the brown horse had become the favourite, and might now be considered the property of the British public.

"I haven't seen him, but my trainer writes me word that he never looked better in his life. I believe they will lay 3 to 1 on him before the day of the race. But I didn't want to rob the poor devil, if his mare wasn't fit to go." Thus spake Tom Thornhill, with the spirit of a gentleman and a sportsman, but with more of the innocence of the dove than the wiliness of the serpent. It was not long before he got the better of these weaknesses, to a certain extent, though they would cling to him more or less to the end of his life.

"If you fellows are going to dine here to-day, I should advise you to go and dress." And with that he walked out of the room.

Perhaps the really pleasantest time after hunting is that shadowy, idle, dreaming hour or two in front of the fire, which may be passed before dressing, either, as I have endeavoured to describe it, in uninteresting chat, in a happy state of semi-somnolence, or in the pages of the most stirring and eventful novel to be met with. The first two states are preferable, as demanding no attention, levying no tax on the intelligence whatever; whilst the last, too frequently calling for a great stretch of the imagination, or a wonderful amount of credulity, is the most appetising. I know nothing so comfortable as the nap, for my part; and it has the double advantage of present repose and additional vigour for the evening's campaign.

"Pass the claret-jug here, Graves, if you please: we'll have some more when that's gone. It's not true that old Lexington has bolted with Lady Mary Teasdale, is it? for I heard so to-day."

"Not a word of truth in it. He's in bed with the gout, and very hard up, so he ordered himself to be denied to everybody. As she was not seen, and she disappeared about the same time, naturally they were supposed to have disappeared together. You know his horses are for sale next Monday fortnight."

"What! from his attack; is it so severe as that?" said Lord Carlingford, who was a connection of the gouty peer, and had some expectations.

"No, certainly not, Lord Carlingford," said Wilson Graves; "his attack is on the chest: they say he had lost forty thousand at the end of last season, and that he dropped fifteen more to a Russian countess at Spa just before the beginning of the winter. Lord Lexington and the count were the best of friends, and everything seemed to be arranged upon the most amicable footing."

"There was a story current that an Englishman shared in the plunder," said Charteris, somewhat abruptly.

"Do you believe it?" asked Wilson Graves as abruptly, at the same time with colour heightened by claret or temper.

"That would depend entirely upon who should deny it." The conversation was taking an unpleasant turn, which it would have required a little tact to stop, when the dining-room door was thrown open, and Mr. Robinson Brown, junior, was announced.

Now be it known to the reader that Robinson Brown was not a favourite with Tom Thornhill, nor, indeed, with any of the men who were present. But Tom was hospitality itself, and could no more do an unkind action, or allow anyone to think himself aggrieved in his house, than he could fly. So down sat "Dear Jane" with as hearty a welcome as if it had been Charlie himself.

"Where are you from?" "What horses have you with you?" "Where are you staying?" "Seen any sport?" were questions poured in upon him as fast as the claret was poured out for him.

"I'm just come from the Dacres," said he with considerable pride at the announcement of a name which gave him a favourable status in the present company.

"The Dacres? by Jove!" said Tom. "Any news? Old Dacre pretty well? Capital fellow! 'pon my soul. And the

'girls?' added he, after a pause, not liking to appear over anxious. "Who had you there?"

"Oh! yes, all very well, excepting Miss Dacre: she's ill of a howwid fever." He had no time to finish the sentence, for Tom was on his feet in a moment; and, fortunately for him, down went the claret-jug, which attracted immediate attention, whilst he had time to collect himself. But the effort was a strong one, and left Tom burning hot, with a very uncomfortable degree of fever himself, whilst his informant added, "Yaas, the younger one, Edith. Charles Thornhill fished her out of the water—fell in near Dacre's osier-bed the end of last week; your bwother lamed his horse. Vewy unfortunate altogether, wasn't it?" And he really felt as much as he was capable of feeling: for he had managed to get up what he called a good wholesome passion for the little Dacre. Tom's colour had subsided, and by the time the butler had brought another bottle of claret, the excitement was over, though Tom continued to repeat, "Poor girl! 'Pon my soul, sorry to hear that: very. And how's Charlie?"

"Your bwother? Oh! he's vewy well. Wather sweet in that quarter, I should say." And here Mr. Robinson Brown lapsed into unusual insipidity. It was getting late, and as no one took any more claret, they adjourned to the drawing-room.

Here Carlingford yawned; Robinson Brown stretched himself on a sofa; Cressingham hummed an air out of a new opera of the last season; Charteris picked up the "Racing Calendar;" Wilson Graves feigned sleep in an arm-chair; and Thornhill himself walked straight to the card-tables. "Anybody for a rubber?" Nobody answered. "Graves, have a rubber?" And a game was made, at which Tom Thornhill won. So far, so good. Then they tried hazard. This was not so good for Tom, who began to lose, and like a true gambler, backed his bad luck. Brown took his leave after having succeeded in backing his mare for the match. The day was then fixed for it to come off, and the riders were declared. Mr. Robinson Brown would steer his own mare, and Mr. Charles Thornhill would ride for his brother. Men naturally asked, Why should Mr. Thornhill not ride himself? Because he had a handsome rent-roll, and his brother had none. And so the night wore on. By degrees the men moved off, Carlingford to his rooms, Cressingham to his, and all to give orders about the morrow. And then, instead of going to bed,

Tom Thornhill would play. His iron constitution seemed to know no fatigue; his indomitable passion was only roused by losses. Nor was Wilson Graves the man to thwart his purpose. One word might then have checked him: but there was no one to say, "No, hang it, Thornhill, we've had enough for to-night; let's go to bed." The devil had taken possession of the room, in the shape of a dice-box, and his prime minister was Wilson Graves. So they went to it again, the one with well-dissembled satisfaction, the other with unfeigned enjoyment—an enjoyment which never appeared to diminish with the loss of hundreds. But at last the game did flag, from a sort of inherent deference to received opinion, that men ought to go to bed before three who have to start for the cover-side again at half-past nine; so they took up their flat candlesticks, and prepared to go, leaving behind them a curious testimony to the housemaid of their evening's occupation: empty soda-water bottles, the ends of cigars, three or four packs of cards, a backgammon board, and a dice-box.

"What do you think about the match now, Thornhill? That ass Mr. Brown seems to have a tolerable opinion of his chance; he laid out another two hundred at evens, when he went away, with your friend Captain Charteris."

"I can lay four to three on myself," said Thornhill, running his eye down a betting book which he took from his coat-tail pocket. "I can lay 800*l.* to 600*l.*, if that will suit you.

"Make it 800*l.* to 500*l.*," said Wilson Graves; "it's more than I like, but I can get rid of half upon those terms. You know nothing but a 'dead 'un' can rob you of it."

"Give me 50*l.*, and I'll do it," said Tom, booking the bet and walking straight up-stairs, some five hundred pounds lighter than when he came down them at seven o'clock.

And so life wagged in Melton under the reign of King Tom.

"That will do, Johnson. Leave that coat and waistcoat out; the morning looks stormy," said Mr. Wilson Graves, some days after the above occurrence, to his valet; "I shall not want you any more. Send up George." And the gentleman proceeded to put a finishing touch to his toilet.

"Come in," said he, a few minutes later, in answer to a knock at the door; "come in:" and enter George, the most perfect of a confidential groom. He was ready for starting, and clearly imagined that his summons had something to do with prepara-

tion, for he held in one hand a neat but useful hunting-whip, in the other a hat brushed to within an inch of its very existence, not a hair was out of place either on it or on the head to which it belonged. His features were regular, straight, and hard. His eye was expressive of nothing whatever, and his mouth of nothing but discretion. He kept it shut most resolutely. He had a furtive glance which betokened at all times a suspicion that the door ought to be locked, and though looking straight before him, it was clear he could see the handle. His ears always appeared to be at cross purposes, one laid back, and the other straight in front, *in utrumque paratus*, ready for either side. He was first-rate groom, and an admirable second horseman.

"Who goes on this morning with the Miller?" demanded the master.

"Job Shuffles, sir," replied the man.

"And who rides the Mannikin?"

"I do, sir." Here he changed legs, and, seeing one hair out of place on his hat, gave it an elaborate polish with his right arm.

"Do you know that brown horse of Mr. Thornhill's that he has matched against Reluctance, Mr. Robinson Brown's mare?" again said the master, finishing off a neat and successful tie, and looking his man very straight in the face.

"The big brown os, as Mr. Thornhill rode last year, and hung up the field at Gopsall Park paling? Oh! yes, sir, I know the os well enough. He's down at Sam Downy's, in training for this match: leastways, I hear so."

"Very likely. Do you know Downy?" And here Wilson Graves dropped his voice to little above a whisper.

"His son and me were schoolfellows, and in service together, when I lived first with Lord Ambulance, sir; and I generally go down to the old man's every year for a day or two, just for a change of air, and a little quiet or so, after the season here, see his osses out, and help him a bit with his stud." Here George pulled up his neckcloth, and seemed to imply that he was rather a valuable coadjutor to old Downy.

"Can you give him some advice about the brown horse, then, George? I know you're a clever fellow, and can do what you like. That horse musn't win, in fact he can't win: the mare's the one to back." And here Mr. Wilson Graves condescended to look again at his groom in a very peculiar manner, which said, "You

know now which horse the money is on now, so do your possible to bring it off."

"They're uncommon sweet, sir; they love the brown os like theirselves: and as to the squire, they love him amost as well as the os."

"And I tell you what they love better than the brown horse, or the squire, and that's money." Graves judged the world by his own standard: he loved money's worth, and cared little how he got it.

"I don't know, sir; you know best: but it's a dangerous game among that lot." George looked preternaturally solemn, and as innocent as a dove.

"It's not the first time we've had to deal with danger. The boy's a certainty, if you bid high enough. Pull the string strong, and they'll all dance. It's time to be off; give me my coat, and send round the hack at half-past nine."

George gave what he intended to be a smile of intelligence, but which was not responded to by his master, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN OFFER.

"Marriage is honourable in all."

"SET a thief to catch a thief!" I think not. The two would be just as likely to combine to rob you, and you would meet with the amount of sympathy you deserve. I cannot understand the principle upon which the greatest poacher in the county makes the best gamekeeper. Surely there are plenty of honest men, with the same amount of knowledge in the destruction of vermin and the preservation of game; and, if so, no gentleman is justified in preferring successful roguery to honourable industry. I am not anxious to see our country police chosen from amongst our ticket-of-leave men, and should certainly mistrust the inspector from Portland Island or the *bagnes*. Not so Wilson Graves. His retainers were not selected for honourable antecedents; and, as their work was sometimes

dirty, the instruments were not to be over-scrupulous. Men who live by their wits in a small way, work for themselves, and their operations are on a par with their expectations. Men who must have thousands out of nothing are the great villains of society; who keep in pay a host of artisans, agents of evil devices, the diggers and delvers after the philosopher's stone.

Graves cared very little whom his people robbed, as long as they let him go scot-free. To say truth, his own rascalities were so numerous, that he gave them very little time to idle. George Ritsom, his groom, was his prime minister; he selected him because he was clever, unscrupulous, and walked about with a rope round his neck, and his master knew it. He was therefore his very humble servant, and understood a hint as well as most men whose apprehensions are quickened by the fear of a halter. It was not quite so bad as that, however; still men have been hung for the same and for less. He had once poisoned a horse; and the proofs were in the hands of Wilson Graves. Good heavens! what a life to lead. I do not speak of either as an absolute pleasure, but better far would it be to be hanged at once, honestly and like a gentleman, than to go through the world a slave of such a man as he. However, there was nothing between servitude to the devil and utter ruin, so George set about his task with a will, and not without hopes, by corruption of an honest lad, of a successful termination. Both master and man acted upon a dictum of Sir Robert Walpole's, that "every man had his price;" by which this world was reduced to the condition of a huge slave market, in which it was supposed that every man must be possessed of some demon, which rules him with a rod of iron under the semblance of a golden thread. I need hardly say, for the credit of human nature, that the dogma is as false as it is dangerous.

Whilst Tom Thornhill was enjoying himself, hunting, losing his money, making good resolutions, and breaking them, and Wilson Graves was profiting by his lengthened visit in Melton, Charlie had three things on his mind which caused him considerable anxiety. The first was his examination, which as it approached, presented its difficulties in gigantic proportions; the second was Edith Dacre, about whom and whose love he felt as most modest men in his position would have felt; for, like many a brave, true-hearted fellow, he had but small reliance upon his own powers of pleasing. He knew what a prize she was, and his love, as it magnified her value, magnified the

temptation it held out to other men. He had difficulty in believing that she could be seen without being admired, or that the fruit could hang long enough on the tree to abide his gathering. Charlie had a great deal of true chivalry in his nature. He was rough, shy, almost awkward in woman's society, but with a feeling for their weakness which is rare indeed amongst your lady-killers. He was not blind to the fact of his claims upon her gratitude; and since her recovery, he had been made to understand, by constant kindness, how thoroughly her family appreciated his services. But this was to him an additional bar to his advancement; and he was further than ever from making her understand his feelings towards her, if such an idea had ever entered his mind. Charlie was one of those men who could no more have told a woman he loved her, premeditatedly, than he could have committed sacrilege with his eyes open. In the present case he looked upon the two things as very much alike. So he made himself uncomfortable, to his full satisfaction; which he need not have done had he known all I knew. The third care was not a heavy one, for his confidence here was as great as in the other matters it was small. This was the steeple-chase between the brown horse, which went commonly by the name of *Œdipus*—from a certain fulness about one of his fetlocks, but which was simply a callous swelling from a blow when a yearling—and the mare *Reluctance*, the property of his mortal enemy, *Robinson Brown*. He was very jealous of that young man—not without cause. For when we take into consideration a fashionable lisp, or whatever his peculiarity of pronunciation might be called, a quantity of first-class jewellery, the whitest of hands, and neatest of feet, a tall, delicate figure, *Mr. Poole's* very best attentions, and the enormous fortune to which he was heir, what young woman could resist him? Yet *Edith Dacre* managed to do so in a very decided manner. And whilst Charlie was fretting, under a whole suit of flannel and three top-coats every morning, at the fancied success of that individual in his pursuit, and which added immensely to the effect of the aforesaid flannels, in getting him down to the requisite 12 st. 4 lb. with the saddle and bridle, *John Robinson Brown*, the heir apparent, was smarting, not from rejected love, but injured vanity. Charlie Thornhill's slashing performance, and consequent rescue of *Edith Dacre*, with the very warm feeling which was exhibited towards him by every member of the *Dacre*

family, had so roused the dormant energies of the Plunger, that he was determined upon closing the account at once. An opportunity soon presented itself.

No sooner was Miss Edith's health perfectly re-established, which it was in a few weeks, from the excellence of her constitution and the invincibility of her spirits, than she determined upon riding again. She began with the old pony, and prudently confined herself at first to the road. It was not long, however, before a lovely morning, such as we have only occasionally in the winter, tempted her to the cover-side. Her father and Mr. John Robinson Brown were her escort. The latter of the two rode one of his very best looking horses, and was altogether such a pattern of perfection as no one but the best of tailors and the most skilful of valets ever sent out. Edith's charms at the breakfast-table, her lovely figure, the glow of renewed health, and the simple beauty of her unaffected toilette, had completely upset her lover. Mr. Dacre was joined on his way to the meet, but a short distance off, by one of his turnip-growing friends, who had got him fast upon the subject of swedes and parsnips making admirable soup, and the relative proportions of saccharine matter in the one or the other. The horses were at a foot's pace, as the gentlemen rode their hunters, and accommodated themselves to their fair companion's humour. She and the millionaire were about a hundred yards behind, and their conversation had taken a turn on general affairs, and affairs of the heart in particular. Never was such a chance, thought the knight; such a thing never can be going to happen, the lady would have thought, had she thought about it. She was just then wondering who the friend was whom he was describing as "weally vewy much—aw—aw—positively quite unable—aw—aw, one of the most vwetched, or the most fortunate—aw—of beings, suffewings, and that sort of thing quite widiculous, mawwiage, and so forth, difficult to expwess his feelings,"—when, leaning gently forward, he ventured to place his own ungloved hand on the lady's pommel of the saddle, occupied already by the tightly-gloved one of Edith Dacre. At that moment a cheerful little bird in the hedgerow (a "wobin in fact," as he afterwards described it), who had heard every word, and understood it—which is more than I or you could have done—flew out with a twitter right in front of Robinson Brown's horse. Captain Bobadil, who was fresher than usual (and he had an awkward way of putting up his back sometimes), gave one lurch to the off-side, as the gallant

cornet was leaning down a little too tenderly, shot out his hind legs with a peculiar twist of the back, and sent his master right into the mud at the pony's feet. Having done this, he trotted on in magnificent form to join the turnip-crushers in front, who were thus made aware of the little accident behind. If Robinson Brown wanted an answer to his remarkable proposal, he found it in an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which the poor girl nearly strangled herself in her endeavour to stifle. The only result to him was the kind enquiries of his friends at the cover-side, whether he had been larking on the way to the meet ; and some sapient remarks, that when he was older he'd know better. The robin evidently knew all about it ; for he saved Edith Dacre, what is always a painful performance to a good-hearted girl, the necessity of refusing a great ass, like a lady. How she would have got through it she has not the slightest idea to this day. He never began again.

Of course the thing was not mentioned by the two parties concerned. We can scarcely conceive Mr. Robinson Brown publishing his own defeat. I can answer for Edith Dacre's silence. In the beginning of December, however, there was a four days' frost, and men came up to town.

"By Jove, Lurcher, how d'ye do?" said our old acquaintance, Tuftenham, of the Foreign Office, walking into the Reform one morning, and tapping his friend on the shoulder. "What sport?"

"Fair ; not very first-rate," replied the other, "We've killed about twenty brace of foxes. Payne has had some capital sport in the Pytchley country. Any news in town?"

"Not much," said the Government clerk. "You know Robinson Brown, the man in the 103rd Dragoon Guards?"

"The woman you mean," interposed Lurcher.

"He proposed to Edith Dacre, out riding. You know the Dacre, Teddy's sister ? and she knocked him off his horse."

"I beg your pardon, Tuftenham," said young Balderdash of the Blues. "I had it from a man who saw it. They were going to cover when it happened ; and Charlie Thornhill, who thought he had insulted her in some way, pulled him off his horse. The thing was hushed up, because of the girl. By-the-way," added he, lowering his tone confidentially, "don't mention it, for it was told me as a great secret, and it might create a row if it got wind—fellows are so deuced particular about that sort of thing."

"Certainly not," said Tuftenham; and off he went to the "Tag and Squeamish" to retail this pretty piece of gossip. Of course it did not come round to Charlie in this form, as it underwent many more additions, modifications, and perversions before it reached him; but he ascertained pretty surely that the gentleman had received his *coup de grâce*, and he was happier for the intelligence. The robin and the frost were to blame.

Most things went on quietly and consistently at Brain Lees Manor House, the sacred grove in which Captain Armstrong instructed British youth in the mysteries of military science. He continued pertinaciously his grog and rubber; the Cantab regaled himself with a short pipe and Burton beer when the day's cramming was over; and the young disciples of the establishment were as consistent in their habits of idleness, duck-hunting, badger-baiting, and rat-catching, as *the Duke* could possibly have desired. They showed a wonderful energy in these matters. *Energy*, we are all assured, on the word of an eminent schoolmaster, is far above learning: but a very keensighted friend of mine declares in favour of *luck*.

One morning, however, on Charlie's return from a visit at Gilsland, he found the house and family in a terrible state of excitement. Craven was missing. Had he gone by himself the loss might have been remedied; but he had taken no less than Matilda, in her best bonnet, with him. By the time the Captain was awake to the fact, Miss Armstrong had become Mrs. Craven, and was already on her third sheet of repentance, unmixed at present with any regret. Of course he was furious; all dram-drinkers are ill-tempered and excitable, and old Armstrong was no exception to the rule. He cursed his servants and his gods, his profession, his pupils, and his wife, whom he accused as the cause of his misfortunes, and then appealed to Charlie, and burst into tears. The lady was less affected. On a general review of the whole case, she drew a lively picture of a reconciled daughter-in-law, a reluctant but undoubted recognition of her claims by the aristocrats of the family, and an occasional entrance on to the threshold of good society through "My daughter, Mrs. Craven;" whose son might possibly become Lord Doolittell, by not more than half-a-dozen unexpected deaths.

"Dear me, Captain Armstrong," said she, "don't make such a fool of yourself—she's old enough to know her own mind and he might have done worse. Drat his uncle; who's he, that he should give himself airs, I should like to know?"

And so she carried her complaints about among her neighbours, but applauded herself at home.

Hypercriticism may ask what this has to do with the business. I admit, nothing whatever. Perhaps nothing more may be heard of Mr. or Mrs. Craven during these volumes: but it was a startling episode in the life of Charlie's tutor, and could scarcely be omitted. Besides, it has its moral, to parents, tutors, and pupils.

We may as well make short work of them all. Craven became an ensign, and took his wife to India; for the uncle and the aristocratic family were inexorable. He died after three years' service, as others have done before him; and his widow, the Widow Craven, who never forgot her uncle, Lord Doolittell, though she reviled him prettily during her husband's life, became Mrs. Major O'Toole, of the Mounted Flybysnights, and led a miserable life, somewhat between that of a *vivandière* and a camp-follower. Old Armstrong had the pleasure of instructing several young O'Tooles in after years; and Mrs. Armstrong mended the little breeches of these brave little warriors, with many a sigh that they were not Cravens.

CHAPTER XXX.

STRONG OF THE STABLE.

"An honest man is able to speak for himself, when a knave is not."—2 *Henry IV.*

CHARLIE THORNHILL had just finished, what in racing language is politely called his last sweat, and was lying in his room preparatory to another attack upon those eternal logarithms, when a knock at the door summoned him.

"Man below wants to see Mr. Thornhill," said the servant.

"What's he like?" said Charlie, through the door.

"Looks like an Irishman. I think he is one, sir."

"Why so?" again demanded our hero.

"Talks like it, sir, and says he's so thirsty."

"Where does he come from; and what does he want? Not a gentleman, is he?"

"Oh! no, sir. Won't give no name; and says he can't leave the house till he's seen Mr. Thornhill."

"Well, then, take care of the hats and coats, and I'll be down in five or ten minutes. I dare say he wants money."

"Most on 'em do, sir. I'll tell him to wait in the hall."

Charlie rose, completed a rapid toilette, and descended. There was no one in the study, and thither he conducted his client. "I think you want to speak to me ; my name's Thornhill."

The man did not answer immediately, and Charlie had time to run him over. He was evidently from the Sister Isle: it did not require him to talk to recognise that fact. He had a quantity of shaggy brown hair, a thick beard, with which his eyes and the general colour of his face were at variance. High cheek-bones and ferret-looking eyes gave a character of cunning to him. His dress was peculiar. He twisted a low-crowned hat in his hand. His clothes were well made, but very shabby. A shepherd's plaid shooting-coat and waistcoat ; a scarlet woollen neckcloth, with the ends hanging down ; and a pair of brown trousers, very tight, and terminating in three buttons over the rough and thick highlows he wore, completed the suit. What was he ? A helper ; a wandering conjuror ; a pedestrian attendant on a pack of hounds ; or a Newmarket tout out of season ? The bird of Jove is said to be rapid of flight ; but before he could have swooped the depth of a moderate house, Charlie's mind had taken in this much.

"Now then, what is it, my man ? Where do you come from ?"

"I come to-day from Mr. Downy's." Oh ! oh ! thought Charlie, something wrong about *Cedipus*. Now I suppose he wants to see my brother.

"Are you engaged in the stable ?"

"No, sir ; not exactly." One of those rascally touts, thought Charlie. It's about time honest men cut the turf. And indeed the gentleman was right.

"Well, then, you know something about our horses. Now, out with it like a man. Let's hear what the information's worth, and you shall have it."

"Faix, then, your honour's right : it is about the horses."

"Which of them ?" said Charlie.

"Well, it's not Kathleen, nor the two-year-old ; them's all right : and I seen Jonathan Wild the day before yesterday. Och ! he's the picture ;" during which speech the man continued to turn and twist the rim of his hat, which might have been better, to have stood the wear and tear. "But there's a big

brown horse, your honour knows, as isn't quite clane-bred; and—and—he's more of a steeple-racer, or whatever your honour calls 'em."

"Cedipus, you mean; the horse that's engaged in a match?"

"Well, Captain, I wouldn't engage for the name," said the Irishman. "I don't well know about them foreigners, but that's the horse that I mane."

"Is there anything amiss with him?" said Charlie, rather nervously, for he knew how heavily Tom had backed him. "The horse was all right a week ago." Here Charlie looked closely at the man, and a sudden idea that he was not unknown to him set him thinking where he could have seen him.

"He's right enough now, and will be so, maybe this week or two, or whenever the match is; but he won't be right the day before, nor the day itself. But I see your honour don't belave me."

"If what you tell me is true, you've some object in telling me," said Charlie, who was still endeavouring to recall the place in which he had seen his companion.

"'Deed, I have, then. It's to save yer money, and, maybe, yer horse; but I'll be murther'd if it's known that I told yer honour anything about it."

"You haven't told me anything about it yet. What is it you fear?"

"What is it I fear? I fear I'll be murther'd," said Pat, taking thought for himself.

"No, no; I mean for the horse," said Charlie, not so particular about an Irishman more or less in the world.

"For the horse? Sure it's poison."

"What makes you think there's any danger of that? Do you know the trainer, Sam Downy?"

"Do I know Sam Downy? 'Deed do I. He's done a queer thing or two, but he won't do that: he's right enough. It's the boys."

"Then why didn't you go to him at once?"

"He's a good man, is Sam Downy; but he's not a real gentleman, Misther Thornhill: he hasn't the blood in him. Wouldn't he think I'd be lying to him; with his own boys, and all? But it's true as gospel; and ye'll belave it, if ye lave the poor beast there till ye see." This seemed a very conclusive condition, but Charlie was too English to enter into it. So he said again—

"This may be true; but I can't test it. How do you know this?"

"Faith I do know it. I heard it."

"Men hear more lies than truth in this world."

"Your honour's right this time. So your honour will send for the horse away?"

But Charlie was too staunch to his point to be shaken off like this, so he said again—

"Not unless you give me your authority. I won't move a hand or foot in it unless you do. Take your news to Mr. Downy."

"You won't? Then, sir, by Jakers, it's just George is my authority; divil a soul else." This was said with a sort of obstinate energy, which impressed Charlie somewhat with its truth.

"And what did George, as you call him, tell you?"

"Just nothing at all. What for would he tell me? Faith it was the lad as looks after the horse, as he told it to. Says he, 'Tim,' says he, 'it must be done. Look at that. That's your own.' And he brings out a beautiful English note, and spreads it out. 'And you'll have a handsome trifle put on for ye besides, now the party knows which way it's to be.' And the boy said something about the squire, maning your brother, and how he loved the horse. And then the blackguard promised that he wouldn't hurt him, only make him safe. And he's to have a key the night before the race; and if the money given for it is anything, it'll be a golden key that unlocks the stable door."

"And where were you when you heard all this?" said Charlie.

"Wasn't I asleep in an outhouse, and they two was talking to one another all the time about Mr. Thornhill's horse."

"And what George is this, that you seem to know so much about?"

"He's George Ritsom; I knew him when I first see him: for we were together, maybe, fourteen or fifteen years ago. He was always a bad 'un, was George. They do say as he's groom to a gentleman—Misther Graves, they call him, a great sporting gentleman." This threw a new light on the subject, and made Charlie pause before he rejected such doubtful evidence. He knew Wilson Graves; he knew his character; and he knew that, for some inexplicable reason, he had been laying against the horse, by commission, up to the very day.

"And your object is to serve me?"

"It is."

"And how have I deserved that at your hands?" said Charlie, who, being one of those men who acted upon some sort of principle himself, expected others to do the same.

The Irishman looked down, with a foolish look, as though not understanding the question. At length he raised his head, and ignoring the previous question, he said, "Then ye'll look afther your brother's horse, sir; I'll go bail he'll pay for the throuble: I never saw a finer beast. He's a grand horse altogether."

"Listen to me, and never mind about the horse. I want to know what I ever did to or for you that you should be anxious to serve me. You must have a reason." As Charlie spoke he rose from his chair, and placed his back, apparently with no purpose, against the door. The movement was not lost on the Irishman, who looked nervous, and again resorted to a vacant stare, whilst he appeared to con the last question.

"What ye ever did to me? Sorrow a thing ye ever did to me. Maybe ye'll mind the puppy ye lost——"

"And got back again. My good man, I'm not likely to forget it in a hurry. Did you hold my horse at Tattersall's that morning?"

"Well then, your honour, I won't decave you. You're too quick for the like's o' me, anyhow. How'll the dog be? I heard that ye had her back."

"She's up-stairs at this minute, and well. But why did you come here to me to-day?"

"Would I make a scandal and a talking in a gentleman's stable? and maybe, he know it all the while, and——"

"What's that, you scoundrel?" said Charlie, interrupting him; "you dare to insinuate that my brother knows of such a thing, or ever heard of such a thing, for one minute, and connived at it. It's a lucky thing for you he didn't hear you say it. I believe he'd have wrung your neck on the spot. He's quicker tempered than I." And here Charlie smiled grimly; for he knew the laxity of stable morality to take too seriously what the Irishman might have considered part of the business of turf-management.

"Och, yer honour, is it him ye calls the young squire? Would I mane such a thing of a gentleman like that? It's Mистер Downy, sure, I was thinking of. Ye see, your honour, I've been a bit in the horse line myself, and, though I'm out of luck, I know a trifle about them sort. They're are not the same

as a gentleman-born." And Mike, for it was he, began to feel quite comfortable at having put Charlie off the scent as to the motives of his information. He was wise enough to hold his tongue, a thing few people can do just in the right place; there's many a good cause spoilt by over-talking. At length Charles Thornhill looked at him steadily and said, "Supposing this information to be true—and I shall take care to see whether it is or no—what is the price? You haven't travelled with it here for nothing. What do you want?" And Charlie resumed his seat by the fire.

Mike stared for a moment, and then drawing up with a certain dignity, which assorted badly with his tight brown trousers and highlows, said, "Faith, it's no fault of your honour's that ye can't understand me. I was better off once, and I'd a good name to the back of me; but it's a long time ago. I haven't a rag on me now that wasn't given to me; and it's not proud that I'd be, under the circumstances, of the name I'd get if I'd my deserts. But I'd rather walk bare-footed to the next jail, or, what's harder fare, to the parish workhouse, than I'd rob one of your name for doing an honest action." Mike burst into tears, the first he had shed for many a long year; and before Charlie had recovered from his astonishment, he was out of the garden-door, and into the road, on his way back again.

No sooner was he gone, which Charlie ascertained beyond all doubt, by looking after him out of the gate, than he began pondering on the strange occurrence. It was not odd that a man should wish to tamper with a horse in training: such things had happened before. But it was odd that the man who did so had no more sense of shame or obligation than appeared to be the case with Wilson Graves. What, too, brought Mike there to tell him? He looked like a scoundrel; doubtless he was one (for appearances are not always deceitful); and yet the man takes a journey and refuses money, two things that none but a mad man would be guilty of, instead of participating in the robbery, as he might have done. All that struck Charlie as singular, to say the least of it. He liked getting to the bottom of a thing. He knew there was a motive for every action, and he had that sort of determination which likes to test it. Now, he was as far off as ever. However, here was a fact—the man had been to him, and had asserted such and such things, leaving him to deal with them.

Charlie's doubts resolved themselves finally into three dis-

ting propositions. When once that happens with a man of his character we may look for a speedy solution of difficulties. For, if not over sharp, he was exceedingly honest; and a sort of useful common sense assisted a conscientious view of right and wrong. His first impulse was to take the matter in hand himself; but a moment's reflection showed him that that had its objections, the simplest of which was that he had no sort of authority whatever to do so. The horse was not his; the stables were not his; the money was not his. He possessed nothing but the information. Should he go at once to Tom? After all, he was the person most concerned. But prudence told him, that if it could be disproved, he might as well spare Tom some very uncomfortable sensations, the impulses of that gentleman rather tending to jump to conclusions and act upon them with a very liberal allowance of energy. Charlie was loth to believe that Wilson Graves was concerned in such a nefarious business; still, appearances were against him. Should he see Mr. Samuel Downy? The only real objection to this was the recollection that he had not secured the co-operation, nor even the address, of his informant, and the injustice he might be doing an innocent boy. Still it was eminently Downy's business to know it, and to fathom it; and if he knew it already, as the Irishman had hinted, the sooner his employers knew it the better for the interests of the turf. There was the journey down, which took up time, a very valuable part of Charlie's capital: strange to say, he spared it grudgingly. One cigar, and a turn in the garden, settled his deliberations in favour of the last course. He put it into practice at once.

Mr. Samuel Downy was one of the stars of his profession; and, as he had risen to its heights from its lowest depths, through all the gradations, he fully comprehended its details. He had that grand virtue, that whilst he was in dignity of carriage, and redness of face, the superintendent of his establishment, he was not above descending to the minutiae of his own stable boys. It was the making of him, as it has been of the great Duke and some other remarkable persons. Sensual indulgence unhappily produced gout, and gout infirmity; otherwise Mr. Downy would have been an active man; as it was, he was a very clever one. He was placed in a situation of much temptation, which he resisted so successfully as never to have been found out. He might have had a brother-in-law who laid against the favourite in Sam Downy's stable, whilst his owner

continued to back him, and his trainer to prognosticate certain victory ; but he took very good care that it was not known if such were the case. The public took him by the hand, and put him on a pedestal, from which a fall would have shaken him sorely.

"Now, my dear Downy, take another piece of buttered toast, and don't vex yourself about the captain's horse ; he'll be all right in the morning, I dessay," said Mrs. Downy, one evening, as she poured out the master's cup of tea with one hand and stroked the flaxen curls of a young Downy with the other. But the master's soul was not to be subdued by buttered toast on this occasion, for the second favourite for the next year's two thousand guineas had hit his leg in his gallop, and was decidedly lame.

"Oh ! yes ; I know he'll be all right again," replied Downy, a little mollified by the attention ; "but lor ! how they will knock him about if the touts get sight of him ; and there's lots of 'em about, Sally ; so I tell ye. Why, he'll be knocked clean out of the betting."

"Well, then, you go and knock him clean in again. Now then, Jim Turner, what do you want lurking about here after the stables is done up ? If you're come after Bessy Knowles, she's gone home to her friends, so you may go after her." You see Mrs. Downy had not yet risen to the high social position she afterwards occupied. She married Sam, when he was a poor man, several years back ; and she had not yet accomplished those company manners which belong to the wives of our top-ping trainers. Indeed, she never did quite reach that pinnacle of perfection which some have attained ; but she was a good honest woman, a great favourite with the gentlemen, and wore a cap which resembled a triple crown in a harlequin jacket.

"I don't want none o' your Bessy Knowleses," said the boy, laughing. "I wants the master."

"Well, out with it then : what have you got to say to the master ? here he is."

"No, no, Mrs. Downy, thank ye ; I'll see Jim after tea in my room ; you go and wait for me in the kitchen, Jim. My dear, send little Sally there to fetch my slippers : blest if I don't think I got a little touch o' my old friend coming." Saying which, Mr. Downy nursed his leg, and Jim Turner retired to the kitchen to make love to Bessy Knowles's substitute.

It was about nine o'clock at night : the low, snug room which

Mr. Downy called his own, and in which he smoked his evening pipe, and drank his evening glass, was warm and well-lighted. Both Mr. and Mrs. Downy were well satisfied with its comforts. It presented to their eyes something brighter than wit, and warmer than friendship. Downy smoked in silence, and Mrs. Downy did the talking at intervals. But her lord and master was more than usually mysterious. Jim Turner had long been dismissed ; and the new cook had washed up, and was reposing in front of the kitchen fire, when they were startled by the bayings and barkings of all the dogs, and a loudish ring at the bell. There is much character in that single action. The present tintamar seemed to say, "I'm coming in whether you like it or no ;" so Mrs. Downy put a cheerful countenance upon it, and after wondering whether it was some half-dozen people, who were not likely to come, attended to a second appeal, by snatching up a candle, with "Lor love the man, he's in a hurry, whoever he is," and going to the door.

"How do, Mrs. Downy ?" said Charlie, as soon as he got inside ; "how's Mr. Downy. I hope I haven't disturbed you ; but it's rather late to come down without writing. However, I want to have five minutes' conversation with Downy, if he's up ;" and here, having been subjected to Mrs. Downy's scrutiny, she recognised the speaker.

Of the two brothers, Downy perhaps rather preferred the younger. Tom hurried him ; was too impetuous altogether ; would back his own prejudices ; and contradicted him unmercifully. Charlie spoke little to him ; was monosyllabic in his remarks ; and kept up accidentally that feeling of mysticism so grateful to the heart of a trainer, or a turfite. He was greatly relieved to see Charles Thornhill in illustration of Mrs. Downy's remark as she opened the door. "Bless me, my dear, if here ain't Mr. Thornhill ; who'd a' thought it at this time o' night ?"

She took an early opportunity of setting the tower of Babel in the harlequin jacket aright, and then proceed at once to ring for another glass, more hot water, and what Irishmen know as the "materials." Charlie was not averse to the arrangement ; mixed himself a tumbler of whisky and water, and accepted a cigar, which had been a present from his brother to Sam Downy.

In the mouth of an orator language is very uncertain in its mode of operation. It takes a long time to make a man understand anything. But Charlie was no orator ; so that he was not

long in making Sam Downy understand the exact state of his suspicions as regarded Œdipus. As Charles Thornhill progressed with his story, he might naturally have expected some remark, some affirmative or negative grunt. Not a sound relieved or assisted him. Slowly and methodically Sam Downy puffed away at his pipe; and as the relater approached the crisis, nothing more than a little prolonged expulsion of smoke betrayed an increased interest in the story. He finished; and Sam puffed away and looked steadily into vacancy. At length stopping his pipe with his little finger, and taking a gulp at his whisky and water, he turned slowly round to Charlie, and said—

“Oh! that’s the game is it? Do you believe it?”

“I can scarcely say that I do. I haven’t told my brother, but I thought it right to come here.” Charlie had been so reassured by the trainer’s coolness, that he really now very much doubted the truth of the story, whatever he might have done. After another half-minute, collecting himself by an effort, he replied to the question—“No! I do not believe it.”

“I do,” said Sam, emitting a cloud of smoke which spoke volumes.

“Any reason?”

“Half a dozen.” Here Charlie waited for one of these half-dozen reasons; but he was doomed to disappointment, for Downy continued to smoke in silence, and then “he drank and smoked, and smoked and drank, and smoked again.” Charlie was too prudent to interrupt his meditations with rash inquiries. After, however, a considerable pause in the conversation he ventured to ask—

“What sort of a boy is it that looks after the horse?”

“Very good boy; good as most, better than most.”

“Do you suspect him then?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Because he is a liar and a coward. They go together.”

“Then is that your idea of a good boy, better than common, Downy? What an experience of youth yours is.”

“There’s only one out of ten that wouldn’t be too bad for the Old Bailey if you could know half the truth. The boy’s been lying to me lately about a key, and his being out at night. I’ve had an eye on him; the horse is all right, and you’ll say to-morrow it’s all over but shouting.”

"If we can circumvent this rascal George, whoever he may be." Charlie turned his cigar in his mouth, looked at it attentively without seeing it, and went on—"But how to do that?"

"Leave it to me. I shall write to Mr. Thornhill to-morrow, sir; and if he'll put me on sixty pounds to forty, I shall be much obliged to him. I'll guarantee him all he's laid upon the horse against anything wrong now."

"Well, then, good night, Downy. I'll be with you to-morrow about nine." And Charlie walked off to the "Stapleford Arms."

"Now, Sally, let's have that rasher in directly. I begin to feel a bit peckish." Mr. Downy still dined early.

The next morning dark clouds lowered ominously above; and there had evidently fallen much rain in the night. Charlie was punctual to his appointment.

"That's a nice colt the one we've passed," said Charlie; "good useful legs and feet, and big thighs and hocks."

"Orlando and Durandarté," replied Mr. Downy; "great turn o' speed." This was said almost in a whisper.

"Strip that Oaks filly, Ned." And the boy slipped off the clothing. "That's a nice filly, Mr. Thornhill;" and he ran his hand approvingly over the mare's quarters. "Quiet!" added he, as she lashed out with one leg. "Quiet, can't ye. This way, sir."

Charlie turned from his inspection into a dark doorway, and Mr. Downy putting a key into the lock, turned it, and they were in the presence of Œdipus. "Now, where's Jim Turner?"

"Here, sir," said a good-humoured looking youngster about eighteen or nineteen; not very strong-minded to all appearances, and mischievous, but not malicious.

"How's the horse?"

"All right, sir." Jim stripped him in a minute, and wiped him down with an old piece of silk handkerchief. The trio stood and surveyed him. He was a good-looking horse; and his appearance told no falsehood. His coat had been singed down closely, but looked glossy and well. He was a long, low horse, able to carry about thirteen stone; and though, as Mike had said, he was not a "clane-bred 'un," still he looked it all over. He had a fine, intelligent head, not too small, well set on to a rather muscular neck, which required no steadying

from adventitious aids. His shoulders were beautifully laid, but a little thick and weight-carrying to a fastidious eye. Good legs and arms in the proper place; and hardy of feel and appearance. Behind the saddle he was beautiful; and his length from the hips was very great. His hocks were well let down, and under him; and with the exception of the blemish from which he took his name, he appeared to be almost faultless. His performance over a country was as perfect as his symmetry; and he required nothing but skilful steering to render victory pretty certain.

"Is William ready with old Saucebox to lead?"

"Yes, sir," said Jim.

"Then on with the cloths directly; you shall see him gallop, sir." And Charlie saw the horse walk and gallop; and he never saw him look or go better. So he wrote a letter to his brother as soon as he reached Armstrong's, telling him of his journey, its object, and satisfactory termination; and he trusted to old Downy's sagacity to defeat any plots, if any existed, fully confident that the man was as honest as it was possible to be, living in an atmosphere of so much temptation.

CHAPTER XXXL

MERCANTILE.

"*Faber quisque fortunæ suæ.*"

I HAVE given the lovers of horse-flesh a good turn lately: I should like to go back to commercial life. *Toujours perdrix* is not so well. Besides, I shall be suspected of a *penchant* for sporting novel-writing, of all things to be avoided. Guide then, O Muse! my pen from the heroic strains of Pythian or Olympic games, and from the seductive charms of stable eloquence, to the less stable designs of commercial life. Let me repose awhile from the exciting themes of love, intrigue, and robbery, on the eider-down pillow of mercantile respectability. Nor think shame of me, fashionable reader, if I am about to plunge my hero in scenes unknown to his progenitors, since the originator of that honoured name, the goldsmith and money-lender of

Lombard Street, retired from the debts and disasters of the Merry Monarch, and his swindling mates, to found a family at Thornhills. Who are the merchant princes, who are the millionaire stock-jobbers of merrie England? They occupy the places of honour in great men's houses. A Plantagenet still has honour, too, when the twigs of the broom he bears are from the gardens of the Hesperides, tipped with gold.

For some days after his interview with Henry Thornhill, Roger Palmer was thoughtful, almost depressed even for him. But the funds went up, and he got better. The unfortunate allusion to his family affairs, and the bluntness of the banker, had set him thinking in the right direction. But a few weeks served to obliterate much of the impression. He had two unconquerable allies, which he called in to his assistance. His long-cherished resentment, which being the stronger feeling time strengthened instead of weakening; and his sense of gratitude, which had better be called his love of money. The dead and almost forgotten Geoffrey Thornhill was ever alive to him as the benefactor of the house of Mint, Chalkstone, Palmer, and Co.; and of himself particularly. Norah, still alive, was dead to him; or remembered as one who would have lavished his beloved gold, even to the last farthing, on a gambler and a *roué*. And had she not preferred an empty-headed stranger, weak and unstable, without a principle or a shilling, to a brother and a man, strong and consistent, with intellect, reputation, and wealth? Norah was paying dearly for her whistle.

He had made up his mind to do the greatest amount of good to the Thornhill family at the least present sacrifice of his own feelings. An obvious mode of relieving any man's pecuniary necessities, or of conferring substantial benefit upon him, is simple. Pay into his bankers a draft for 50,000*l*. This is supposing you have double the money and wish to share it with him. This, however, requires one or two conditions to make it feasible. The man must be a needy, dependent, shameless kind of person, to whom you would give it; unless some strong chain of relationship or personal service bind him to its acceptance. Roger Palmer never contemplated parting with such a comfort, any more than Charlie Thornhill would have accepted it. Roger Palmer did not regard 50,000*l*. in hard cash as, 2500*l*. per annum; but as a sacred idol, which could only be parted with to the man who should stand in his shoes. The income derivable from it might be given up. It hardly assumed the

appearance of a hand, a finger, or a nose of the idol. It was an essence derivable from that tutelary influence which seemed to be thrown off for the advantage of one worshipper, it is true ; but the sacred figure remained intact to its possessor. But would Charlie Thornhill reject the essence ? There was a difficulty in making the proposal, it is true. Roger Palmer was deficient neither in tact nor discernment ; and though he knew little of the man, he knew enough of his character to doubt.

Banking, that is, prosperous banking, is a very pleasant amusement. The senior partner is usually a dignitary, a baronet (if not of James I's creation), an M.P., and a most influential authority on all matters, in and out of the house, connected with finance. So it was with the firm of Mint, Chalkstone, and Palmer. Sir Julep Mint was a very great man. If he had not been a banker he would have been Lord Mayor. He had the seeds of greatness in him. He was married to a lady in her own right, and was called Lord Soapstone from the name of his place and the dignity of his manners. In a word, he was a pompous ass, and a very low churchman. Chalkstone was a much better fellow all over. He was a good hard liver ; ate a dinner every day of his life, and if he ever had the gout, had earned it. He drove off his enemy by horse exercise. Was not a bad man over a country, and kept half-a-dozen first-class weight-carriers in the roothings of Essex ; certainly the best provincial country in England, and not far short of the shires. He was an easy man to deal with. For though he said it in a blunt manner, he usually said what he meant.

In a large, comfortably furnished room, at the back of the *comptoir*, and connected with it by large and handsome glass folding-doors, one morning in December sat the three partners, active partners, of the respectable firm above alluded to. They had under consideration the feasibility of taking into partnership some younger man, who would put a certain capital into the business, and work gratuitously for a certain number of years, until the seed he had sown should produce an abundant harvest. There were plenty of such men to be found ; but there were not so many thirty thousand pound notes to be met with, and somehow or other, banking was not in its zenith. There had been a tremendous smash or two, especially among the low-church party, and it required time to give the public confidence. Again, Sir Julep had lots of daughters, but no son, not even a son-in-law. Those who were high enough to aspire to that

happiness were too worldly, the rest were nowhere. Chalkstone was without children, and had a Caligula-like fancy for making his bay horse a partner. He often declared that he was the only one of his acquaintance that he could trust. I wonder whether Caius Cæsar or old Boots had an equally sufficient reason for appointing to the consulship! Be that as it may, the two seniors being failures, the appointment fell to Roger Palmer. Much to the astonishment of his colleagues, he accepted the onus, guaranteeing the money, and only asking two or three days for some necessary correspondence. So reasonable a request could not be gainsaid. Due respect was had for the superior age and intelligence of the junior partner of the firm. Whilst he lived it was founded upon a rock; might his successor be like him?

"You propose to send him abroad to conduct the foreign business first, Mr. Palmer; it's a great responsibility."

"Rather, Sir Julep, as a representative of our house; he must be a gentleman, if possible, of some position."

"Most undoubtedly, most undoubtedly; we are in your hands, my good sir, and it must be evident to our foreign correspondents that we can send out no counterfeit, no counterfeit in any sense. It behoves the aristocracy, in times of danger, like the present——"

Here Chalkstone, in anticipation of a speech, interrupted the worthy baronet: "Let's have a good fellow, Palmer, into the kennels, into the bank, I mean. Fresh blood, sir, is a grand thing in a pack of hounds—body of directors I should say; and I hardly know any kennel we could fall back upon, with any better chance of success, than our friend Palmer. A good, steady, true, old-fashioned, line hunting, that is, an honest, intelligent, gentlemanly, young man, possessing the requisite amount of industry and pluck, and—and——"

"Money," added Roger Palmer, with a little sigh, for he couldn't help feeling it, though he had made up his mind with the heroism of a Spartan.

"Are you going my way," said Sir Julep, with one of his most polished and condescending bows; "my brougham is at the bottom of the street; I'm on my way to the lying-in hospital; it's the anniversary of the Dorcas Society, and the little help that Lady Elfrida can afford we are only too happy to bestow: I can put you down, and go on for her."

"Or come with me, Palmer, my cab's at the door, and I should

like you to see my new brown horse. I know you like a horse, although you pretend not to ;” and Chalkstone almost pushed him out of the room before him.

“No, Sir Julep, thank you ; no, no Chalkstone ; I can’t afford to have my neck broken before this business is settled, you know. Let me walk home. It is but a step. I shall let you know, in a day or two, all about my nominee. The money’s right enough ; the money’s right ; and that’s the great consideration ;” and away went the little miser, as quickly, and as jauntily, as if he had been a treasury clerk of five-and-twenty, with four hundred a-year. He knew that walking by yourself was cheaper than riding with other men.

The result of this conversation was a letter to Charles Thornhill. It reached him at a time when circumstances made it more acceptable than usual. Charlie’s military ardour had never been great. He had never been attacked with scarlet fever, or at so early an age that it left no traces behind it. It was the turning-point of his life. All men have the turn ; but few know it, and many neglect it. Verily, industry is a great thing, learning is a great thing, energy is a great thing, but *luck* is the greatest.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A FIRST VISIT.

“*Utere convivis, non tristibus utere amicis.*”

THERE was a frost at Melton—indeed in most places. In vain the after-dinner zealots kicked the heels of their boots into the ground ; in vain they looked at the thermometer ; in vain they inquired after the moon. The frost would not go, so they did. Some to London ; some to shooting quarters ; some to agreeable country houses. The horses remained in Melton, to wake rude echoes from the hard roads as they passed to morning exercise, slipping and sliding, here, there, and everywhere ; their riders loading the morning air with the thin clouds of their tobacco ; the masters lounging in bed, and impatient at the weather which made them thus inactive.

“When are you going, Thornhill ? This is the third day,

and it looks like lasting. Everybody, except you and me, is gone to town. They were all off yesterday. Tailby skated to cover, and waited till one o'clock, but the horses could hardly trot, so we came home again. I'm told the Oakley haven't been stopped at all."

"Very likely not, but I shan't go to see: I'm off to-day," replied Tom Thornhill, but he did not think it necessary to add "*where*." Either it was not sufficiently important, or far too important, to be mentioned. The assumption was that he was bound to London; the fact was that his road lay to Gilsland. He was not a man to make himself unhappy about a frost; and the Dacres' invitation, which had been accepted conditionally, was regarded now as the greatest boon.

So Thornhill ordered his valet, and his valet ordered the post-horses; and having sent over a groom with a couple of hacks to the "Dacre Arms," and having left orders for the stud to be forwarded in the event of a sudden thaw, he himself started about four o'clock for Gilsland.

The house was not full, but there was a good sprinkling of men and two or three women. A dowager to assist Mrs. Dacre in her hospitalities, or schemes; and a dear friend or two of the girls, without which no young woman of well-regulated mind seems capable of going through life. They write an infinity of letters, have always a breakfast confidence though they may have slept together, and wear the same coloured neck-ribbons.

It is but fair to say that Alice had fewer weaknesses of this kind than most girls. Her nature was eminently affectionate, warm-hearted, and impulsive, but non-sympathetic. She was superlatively true. She had certain notions of right and wrong, of the fit and unfit, which she might have broken through under some circumstances, but not where her own interests were concerned. In the choice of an intimate she would have deceived neither herself nor another. This prevented close alliances with persons of her own age. Besides which, she believed her mother and sister to be her truest friends, and most worthy of her confidences. She would have loved with heart and soul, possibly an unworthy object; but she would have done so with her eyes open, and would have died in an endeavour to stifle her love.

Edith Dacre was less qualified to fight against that interesting partner of unmarried life, a "dearest friend." She was more

inclined to lean upon somebody. Her character wanted support. She was moderate enough in her demands ; but she did the letter writing and the matutinal confidence part of the business admirably. It is but justice, however, to say she had a limit to her amicitial relations, and had mentioned not even the name of Charles Thornhill nor Robinson Brown to Lucy Trevanon, the supposed friend of her bosom, the depositary of blighted affections and of rejected addresses.

Tom Thornhill was in time for dinner. He stayed many days ; and as he was in love when he got to Gilsland, and had had the symptoms on him ever since the end of last season, it is not singular that the malady should have broken out upon him in full force during the frost, which lasted more conveniently for him than for foxhunting.

The life in an English country house is much the same everywhere. There was shooting for the men ; an occasional day with the rabbits, and one or two grand battues. The covers at Gilsland, though not rivalling those of Lord —, were good enough. Mr. Dacre was not likely to be sent for by a committee of the House to give evidence on a new Poaching Bill, or to offer suggestions on the cause of the increase of crime, as connected with overstocked preserves ; but he had always his regular days during the season and a frost at midwinter was too good an opportunity to be passed by.

Thornhill was an excellent shot. He was an excellent sportsman, which is widely different from a mere gunner. Whether he walked over the turnips and stubbles, whether he accompanied Harry Stapleton and the keeper to the common at the end of the park, or whether he was posted at the warmest corner of the cover to make slaughter of the thickest boquet, he won golden opinions. All the men in the house talked of him. The ladies'-maids heard all about him. He was referred to and deferred to daily at the table, when questions arose amongst the men, and it is not extraordinary that the women caught the epidemic.

There was no hunting, it is true ; but the less chance there appeared of a re-commencement of that sport, so much the more did the conversation turn upon it, as if, in very defiance of the season, something was to be done. And here Thornhill certainly was no mean authority. What had *he* done with his horses ? What did *he* think of the run from Loseby ? Was it as good as Cheney said it was, and had he really the best of it ? Yes,

it was excellent, and Cheney had far the best of it ; he, Thornhill, never could get near him. His modesty disarmed the foes which his courage might have made. The women heard less of this, but they took their cue from the men ; and Tom Thornhill was in the ascendant.

Then they went to an election dinner. The local papers reported Tom Thornhill's speech, and all agreed that it was the most amusing, if not the most erudite, of the evening. The "Times" condescended to make an extract. Eloquence always finds its way to the hearts of the women. They skated, Thornhill admirably ; and he insisted upon a sledge on the ice for the ladies. They had some impromptu charades ; he was the life and soul of the *corps dramatique*. He was not much in the library, but he seemed to be more or less *au courant* to the literature of the day ; thanks to the periodicals, which are supposed to do the heavy work, and which as effectually preclude the necessity of deep research as they quicken the taste for less meritorious productions.

Without wishing to hurt the feelings of my female readers, this is a character which seldom fails to awaken their interests ; more especially when joined to a handsome person and a good rent-roll.

Guests went and came. Still Tom Thornhill remained. He had promised himself and Mr. Dacre a week's hunting round Gilsland, and the latter would not be denied. "Mr. Thornhill must find it very stupid here," said Mrs. Darce. Next week, to be sure they expected Harry Stapleton back ; the General was coming, Lord and Lady Dunningfield and Baron Hartzstein ; and the frost looked like going. So Tom stopped on, nothing loth ; and sent for his horses ; and the frost did go, which is not usually the case when you send for your horses ; and the guests came, which is not usually the case when you particularly want them ; and everything was *couleur de rose*.

Meanwhile the Dunce of the Family was making up for lost time. He had put everything pretty straight at Downy's. He had told his brother all his suspicions, who poo-poo'h'd them of course, and in his multifarious employments had almost forgotten the subject. He had made up his mind to get through his examination, if it depended upon himself ; and he felt inclined to believe old Armstrong when he said so. At least it was clear that no great amount of assistance was to be looked from that learned pundit ; and the young Cantab was so

desperately afraid of Charlie that it was difficult to get out of him what he did know. Charlie Thornhill was not one to give up a thing he had once taken in hand : so he worked away every morning, indulging in a walk during the frost every afternoon, and pulling out of his pockets, at intervals, the dates of the Stuarts, the battles of the Wars of the Roses, George the Third's Ministers, the men of letters of Queen Anne's reign, a list of the British dependencies, the principal ports in Ireland, and the military stations of Hindostan, together with a long list of heterogeneous information, to the copying of which the captain's abilities were limited. And yet there were several fellows got through in spite of the captain, and made very good soldiers. What clever fellows they must have been.

One thing, in the middle of it all, Charlie did not do. He did not go so frequently to Gilsland. Since he heard of Robinson Brown's discomfiture he felt it would be bad for him. If it be possible to analyse his feelings at this time, perhaps, summed up in his own language, they may have amounted to this—"Only let me get over this examination, and the steeple-chase, and then we'll see all about it." The three together were too much for his simple soul.

"You had a good run to-day, Mr. Thornhill?"

"Not at all, Miss Dacre ; what made you think so?" said Tom, lounging into the hall in scarlet, covered with the mud which accumulates on a thaw, and desiring his servant to be sent to him.

"You look so happy ; and I concluded it was the run," said Alice.

"One can scarcely be unhappy here : but I'm not so wedded to horse and hound as you imagine. It really pains me to think that I can be so far misjudged." At the same time looked brighter than ever, and not at all pained.

"Misjudged? Oh! Mr. Thornhill. No one misjudges you; but——" Here Alice felt the colour beginning to rise. Tom waited for the fruit of the "but." "But, but, with all your love of—of—of——" (Alice would like to have said "play") "hunting and racing, it is odd that you should find much pleasure in our quiet home." Here she thought she had said too much, so she added : "Unfortunately, my brother is gone to Berne ; but the General comes to-morrow, with Lord and Lady Dunningfield, and then you will be better amused."

Here Thornhill's servant crossed the hall with clothes, hot

water, &c., &c., and it was necessary to say something. "Martinet, Martinet. Oh! he comes to-morrow," said he, in a quick, unmeaning sort of tone. "Oh! ah! well! yes! Capital fellow, Martinet. You know him well, Miss Dacre, of course? He'll talk of nothing but horses. He's forgotten the army almost. Just recollects one circumstance; and then he had a horse shot under him."

"No; I never saw him. This is his first visit here." Alice might have added, that he was asked especially to meet Thornhill as a racing ally. Mrs. Dacre thought he ought to be made as comfortable as possible. Martinet, Hartzstein, and Dunningfield, were all racing men; Stapleton did everything; and George Fitzgerald could show him the way to cover, and from cover, and discuss the run when they smoked their cigars at night. Mrs. Dacre was a very clever woman, and kept her own counsel. Martinet was delighted, Fitzgerald was flattered, and excepting herself, I don't think any living soul had the slightest suspicion of her game. She hardly knew it herself, her skill was so ladylike, so profound.

"Lady Lucy Trevanon wants to know what became of Robinson Brown to-day, after they found. He was riding close by you, Thornhill, when Miss Edith Dacre and Lady Lucy arrived, and he wasn't seen afterwards."

Edith coloured, and looked hard at Lady Lucy, who was bent upon amusing herself at somebody's expense.

"Surely it's not *you*, Mr. Thornhill, that the Heir Apparent has to fear?" Here Lady Lucy's eyes sparkled with malicious pleasure, and she saw her dearest friend fidgeting on her chair. The fact is, that Lady Lucy had been behind the scenes just to that dangerous point when people begin to conjecture what there is further on. Had she been thoroughly trusted she might have held her tongue now, but would assuredly have told every one of her acquaintance at a proper opportunity under the strictest seal of secrecy.

Thornhill with more good-nature than truth, with some little inkling of the state of affairs, said: "Robinson Brown was riding the horse with which they tried Reluctance the other day, and didn't want to exhibit his capabilities in my immediate neighbourhood. But, Miss Dacre, you never hunt?" The last speech was Greek to the ladies, and shut up Lady Lucy Trevanon.

"Never," said Alice, with a rather determined but good-humoured face.

"That means ~~never~~ will."

"You read countenances well, Mr. Thornhill. Surely one sportswoman is enough for a small stud. Besides, we have had our warning."

"Ah! I beg your pardon for reminding you of ——" Here Tom stopped suddenly.

"We never need to be reminded of it: it is a pleasure to remember our obligations to your brother. He has become very intimate here lately."

"So I hear. I envy him the leisure and the distinction." Tom began to think almost that Alice was in love with Charlie.

"As to leisure, he hasn't much: the distinction, if it is one, is well deserved. We owe him two lives out of the three."

"Charlie's a good fellow, Miss Dacre: too good to go out of the country. I can't understand why he should go," rejoined Tom.

"I think I can," said Alice; "but it is not everybody that would understand your brother."

"Quixotic?"

"Not the least in the world: never was good common sense so strongly exhibited: I love his independent spirit. You see he has made a *confidante* of me."

'How like Lady Marston she is,' thought Tom. And so she was, but stronger. She had lived less in the world, and was less a woman of it. It was quite clear she was not in love with Charlie. Could that ridiculous story about Robinson Brown, Edith Dacre, and his brother be true?

The ladies left the table, Lady Dunningfield leading.

"What's doing about your brown horse, Tom?" said Mr. Fitzgerald, who lost no time in leading the conversation at his end of the table. "The frost won't suit him."

"I really don't know. I shan't back him any more. They lay even, and I have laid odds on him." Mr. Dacre was busy with a pear, but he looked up, and mournfully, at his guest.

"Who rides *Cedipus*, Thornhill? The general wants to know," said Lord Dunningfield. The general was deaf, and sat with his hand behind his ear.

"My brother Charlie, general. He wants some holding."

"And who rides the mare?" asked the general, winking his over-hanging brows.

"The owner," shouted Dunningfield again. "I saw him today on a first-class horse. I don't think he can ride him. Your brother is three stone in your favour, Thornhill."

"I think not. You don't do Robinson Brown justice. He rides very well, Dunningfield; and his mare is fast, and can stay."

"You want the odds," said Lord Dunningfield.

"Not a halfpenny. But ask Fitzgerald."

"It's true, my lord. He can ride, if all goes right, very well. He went beautifully from Crick Gorse, one day early this season, on the mare. He can't ride a bad horse, like Charles Thornhill. Few men can. But——"

"So!" said Hartzstein, who was anxious to exhibit his knowledge of languages, three of which he spoke imperfectly, but upon all occasions. His passion was the turf, his *beau idéal* of a man of fashion an English sportsman, and his vocabulary a mixture of the Viennese *salons* and the British stable. "So-o-o. Ye-é-es. I remember me vell. Monseigneur le Prince de Cambridge got away mit de leading hounds, and Robainson Brown stock to him like a bricks. He took all the fences first, and Monseigneur était content de le suivre. Mais enfin, they arrive at a regular sticker. 'Donnerwetter!' says Robainson Brown, 'dies geht nicht, dere is no hole, and my horse is a little battu.' But he is suddenly becomes dam polite, is Robainson Brown; so he says, 'J'aurai l'honneur de vous suivre, mon Prince, you shall go first; I shall follow after.'"

"Bravo! Baron. And what did Monseigneur do?"

"Oh! ah! he attrapait—a devil of a cropper. Dornhill, I shall lay you five—five to four—in—in—what shall it be?—little horses, what you call ponies?" But Thornhill had just been summoned from the room by a servant, and nobody accepted the liberal offer.

Baron Hartzstein was just one of those men who are received in England nobody knows why, excepting that he had plenty of money or credit, dressed well, was always in a good humour, had excellent manners, and made himself pre-eminently English. He was supposed to be an agent of the Prince de ——, from Vienna, and had the management of the prince's stud in this country. He had been eminently successful for a foreigner; laid the odds or took them with the same cordiality, generally a point or two more than the market. He was not quite accredited by the highest-class foreigners, but nobody seemed anxious to throw down the glove: and as he had a bowing acquaintance with good men of his own country, and nobody was willing or able to answer the question, "Who is Hartzstein?" he held his own pretty firmly here.

The conversation had become decidedly *horsey* at the baron's end of the table ; and as Dacre and some neighbouring country gentlemen were not in a position to enter upon the relative merits of certain fillies and colts for the next year's Derby, the host gracefully rose from the table, and the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MATCH-MAKING.

"Je propose." "Jouez, s'il vous plait."

TOM THORNHILL was not in the drawing-room, nor in the billiard-room. There was attraction in both. He was at that moment in Mr. Dacre's morning-room, in an arm-chair, and standing before him was a tall, strong, black-whiskered individual, whom we have met before. Thornhill had not.

"I assure you it is true. Make what ye will of it." The speaker spoke brusquely, but not disrespectfully.

"I have heard something of this before," said Tom, shading his eyes, and looking at the man by the dim light of a single reading-lamp.

"Not from me. And I know none else that would tell you."

"Then you've an accomplice that you know nothing about. Tell me exactly how much you have to do with it. I've already given you my word."

"I had everything to do with it. When I heard the horse belonged to Thornhill, I cried off. I won't betray my associates. I have given you your caution ; make what use of it you will, sir. I see you believe me."

In truth it was the same story as Charlie had already told him, from a different quarter. Tom did believe something about it ; but he lived in an atmosphere of suspicion. "Why do you tell me instead of plundering me."

"That's neither here nor there. There are plenty to plunder you without me. But make your mind easy ; the owner of Reluctance and Sam Downy have nothing to do with it : but you'll be done this turn if you don't keep a strong look out,"

Here the man straightened his coat and buttoned it, gave one turn to his hat, and prepared to retreat.

"Will you tell me your name?"

"Have you ever heard of one Kildonald?" said the man, sternly.

The name jarred strangely on Thornhill. He had heard it years ago. In a moment his sad recall from Eton, his father's indulgences, and early and mysterious death, rose before him, and linked themselves with the name. Was this the man? Impossible. This man was not ten years older than himself: scarcely so much. Kildonald had never been heard of for years: occasionally his name was mentioned, in no measured language, as a defaulter and a rogue. "Yes, I have heard the name," said Tom, after a pause.

"That's a name I might have borne had I had my deserts. But they bend the twig, and cast the tree into the fire because it doesn't grow straight."

"My good fellow," said Tom, "whatever you have done, you mean me an essential service. Give me a means of serving you. You have had a journey." And Tom crumpled a note in his hand as he rose towards him.

"Not a shilling," said the man, fiercely, and, turning on his heel, was gone before Tom could recover sufficiently from his astonishment.

After sitting in gloomy silence for a quarter of an hour, running over the best days of his boyhood, and making some sombre reflections on his present career, his coming match, and his Newmarket engagements, Tom rose, shook himself free from his cares, and sauntered towards the drawing room. A sight of Alice would cure him. The room was deserted. What! so late? Eleven o'clock; All the women gone to bed? No! they are in the billiard-room: General Martinet and George Fitzgerald playing a game.

"The general giving you a lesson, Fitz?" said Tom, at the open door.

"Yes; it's not very dear; a pound a game. We've just finished. The ladies are waiting for you and Dunningfield."

"I can't play to-night." And for the first time in his life Tom was proof against persuasion and odds. He took a seat by Alice Dacre, who never found him so agreeable. Tom Thornhill was a charming rattle; but no one knew him who had not seen him in a graver mood. Lady Lucy Trevanon would have

been quite satisfied with him as he was. Alice Dacre would have given her life to have made him something more. Which was the true lover?

There was a smoking-room at Gilsland, to which men retired after the ladies, and Dacre (who never smoked,) or any persons of antiquated notions about six hours' rest or eight hours' rest, were gone to bed. Here was whist, a little higher than in the drawing-room; here were books on the Leger compared; here were the racing *on dits* of the day sifted; and, above all, a considerable deal of handicapping and match-making for the next Meeting took place over cigars and hock and seltzer water.

Tom Thornhill had had a bad time of it. During his stay he had sat late, and played high, not with success. Hartzstein was always ready to play; Dunningfield and Martinet were not averse to making up a rubber. George Fitzgerald played at times; he was one of those men, too, who did not always pay. Carlingford had been down, too, and carried away a hundred or two with him. Now and then Tom looked his position in the face, and saw a very deep gulf in his once ample resources. But his lawyers had never failed him yet, and had not even talked of a mortgage. Still it had been a ruinous winter.

One night, within a day or two of his intended return to Melton, the usual party were assembled. The room was not large, nor well furnished, but comfortable; with a good fire very habitable. The cards were packed, and the men had turned to the fire in arm-chairs for half an hour's chat before separating. The baron and Lord Dunningfield were going in the morning; the general followed the next day; and Fitzgerald's groom had got the route. As usual, some discussion was on the *tapis* about the relative merits of certain horses; and each maintained his opinion with considerable obstinacy.

"Then let the general handicap them for the Spring Meeting," said Thornhill.

"What are they?" said the general, who was the best judge in England, and who, naturally a shrewd, clever man, had bent all his powers of observation to the turf. "What are the animals?"

"Thornhill's Humble Bee and Harry Stapleton's Beau, for five hundred: two hundred forfeit," roared Lord Dunningfield, who sat on the general's deaf side.

"What are they—three-year olds? what have they done? Nobody ever heard of them before?" said the general, laughing,

and blinking his heavy brows good-humouredly. "What's yours, Thornhill?"

"A —— bad one, general," said Tom, in a cheerful voice, as if he was rather proud of his incapacities. "The Bee's a roarer."

"So are you. What about the Beau, Stapleton? didn't he run Medora to a head in the last October Meeting?"

"No; Medora gave him a seven pound beating. They're both three-year olds. Thornhill's is a very bad 'un, but he's the best of the two; he gave Rapparee twenty-one pounds and a beating in a trial. Ask the baron,"

"What do you say, baron?"

"Tous les deux sont screws!" said Baron Hartzstein, delighted at the opportunity of exhibiting his idiomatic English.

"Well, now for it then?" said the general: "there's nothing to be got out of either of you; there's my half-crown," at the same time he placed one on the table, and began a mental calculation, which might have embraced the value of the two Americas instead of two race-horses.

"And there's mine," said Thornhill, at the same time relighting his cigar, which had gone out in the discussion. "Don't forget the Bee's a roarer."

"And there's mine," said Harry Stapleton, opening a bottle of seltzer water. "There's mine. Remember seven pounds worse than Medora."

But the general was deep in meditation, and rubbing his forehead slowly, over his shaggy brows, paid no attention at all to these suggestions. "Eight stone seven—eight stone seven—yes—yes" (with great deliberation.) "Mr. Thornhill's Humble Bee, what's he by?"

"Lazy Boy, out of Industry's dam," roared Fitzgerald.

"Mr. Thornhill's Humble Bee shall carry eight stone s-e-v-e-n, and Mr. Stapleton's the Beau—the Beau—wait a moment, shall carry eight stone—yes, eight stone; the ditch mile, on the last day of the meeting, for two hundred, half forfeit; that's quite enough, quite enough. See you first, Thornhill: show."

Tom Thornhill opened his hand; no money was in it.

"Come, Stapleton, let's see yours;" and he opened it with a like result.

"No match then," said a chorus of voices, whilst the general swept the three half-crowns into his pocket. The conversation went on as before.

"Come, I'll tell you what you shall do then, as you want a

match," said the general. "The Beau shall run Baron Hartzstein's bay filly Cantatrice, at even weights, for two hundred, half forfeit. Cantatrice was bred in France, wasn't she, baron?"

"Gewiss, of course, certainly; so you allow seven pounds, of course."

"Oh, I'm in the hands of the general," said Stapleton, producing another half-crown, which General Martinet immediately covered, an example followed by Baron Hartzstein, coupled with a suggestion too.

"You know we think Cantatrice a very moderate animal in France."

"Do you? then by Jove you must have some pretty good ones behind the curtain. We call her a very smart filly on this side the water, baron; she's been unlucky."

"The general puts it mildly," whispered Fitzgerald to Thornhill.

"Well, now then, general, what is it? Let's have a run for it."

"So you shall; you shall carry eight stone, and the baron eight stone five. Two hundred pounds, half forfeit next meeting; that's the way I put the allowance. Show."

The baron opened his hand with a sinister smile, and it held money.

"Then it's a match," said Harry Stapleton, showing his own. And again the general swept in the half-crowns.

"I'll lay 500 to 400 on Cantatrice," said Tom Thornhill.

"I'll take that," said Lord Dunningfield; "again if you like."

"No, that'll do for me at present;" and Thornhill finished his sherry and water, and prepared to move off.

"Stay a moment. Haven't you anything you can match at the first meeting, Thornhill? What's that colt you bought at Hampton Court the summer before last?"

"Orlando and Fly-by-night; oh, yes, he can gallop, but he can't stay, you know. Half a mile is about his distance," said Tom; "he's only a two-year old, and not very forward; however, try your luck, general."

"Well then, Lord Dunningfield, can't you do something with the Fly-by-night colt? That filly that was third for something good at Salisbury."

"You mean Maid Marion; she was beat a length by that young Touchstone horse of Scott's. I can run her for half a

mile; make the weights right, general." Lord Dunningfield laughed, and threw down his money; the other two half-crowns followed.

Again the general was buried in profound thought. He shut his eyes, rubbed his forehead, rumbled his time-thinned locks, and looked at the ceiling, which he could not see for the smoke, and then spoke oracularly.

"Thornhill's colt shall carry seven stone seven, and Lord Dunningfield's filly—she's a three-year-old—eight stone eight; last half mile of the Beacon Course; the last day of the Spring Meeting. Thornhill holds money. How are you, my lord? No! then it's no match, and the half-crowns are Thornhill's. That's the best handicap I've made to-night. And now let's go to bed," said he, throwing his cigar into the fire. "I don't know what Dacre will think of all this."

The same idea occurred to Tom Thornhill. When he turned on one side of his pillow he saw Alice Dacre. He could not be indifferent to her. A thousand trifles had assured him he was not. He'd go and live at Thornhills, and make his mother happy, and take her home a daughter she could love. How the two women at Thornhills would rejoice. He saw their approving faces through half the night. And then he turned on his pillow, and saw Dacre of Gilsland, stern and sad, and he thought Alice was very like her father about the eyes and mouth. Would he give his child to a gambler?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ANOTHER OFFER.

"I like thy counsel: well hast thou advised."
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

On the morning of the day on which Tom Thornhill was to leave Gilsland, as good or ill luck would have it, he walked into the library, where he found Alice Dacre turning over the pages of an old periodical. It was quite clear she was not reading

them. He was in most things a person of impulse, and it was just possible, notwithstanding his feelings, that, but for this accidental meeting, Tom would have left unsaid what he had to say.

An ominous silence reigned for a minute or two, when Tom Thornhill looked up from the paper he was pretending to read, and said in a low voice, "Alice."

"Mr. Thornhill."

"Excuse the abruptness of my address. It must have been evident to you during the few weeks I have been here that my happiness, everything I have in life, is dependent upon you. If I have been unable to impress you with this I have indeed failed;" and here Tom took a passive hand in his, and proceeded in language which is always incoherent at the best of times, and when perfectly sincere, more incoherent than usual.

Alice regained possession of her hand, and rising to her full height, placed it for support on the back of a chair. A blush rose to her cheek, and a tear hung on her eyelashes; and if she ever looked perfectly lovely, it was now, as she answered a portion of his eloquent appeal.

"Have I, indeed? Have I led you to suppose that you were not indifferent to me?"

"Forgive me if I have hurt you by what I have said. I was foolish, and flattered myself; and now I have been rash and impertinent to the only being——"

"No, no, don't say so;" and one single tear glistened a moment and dropped.

"Am I not then entirely indifferent? Oh, Alice, if a lifetime of devotion could assure you how sincerely I love you, give me the opportunity of proving it."

Maidenly reserve and truth struggled for a moment in Alice. She almost immediately saw that they were consistent the one with the other.

"It would be unkind to let you remain under a wrong impression until we meet again. You have surprised me into an admission. But we have seen so little of each other. Surely a solemn engagement, such as marriage, demands something more than we see respond to it in ordinary life. Can you bear to know me more intimately, to see me, not as the *fiancée*, but as the friend? every day should be dearer to us that enables us to know each other as we are, and not as we seem to be; not to awake some morning and find our idol broken and dis-

honoured. Oh, how many are there in this world of ours who would give millions to recall words spoken in all sincerity, but which a false sense of honour has led them to confirm ! Our happiness—nay, mine, if you will—must not be based upon such an uncertainty. My whole heart, without one single doubt, one single scruple, shall be given, but it shall go hand in hand with respect and esteem. Are you satisfied with my honesty ?”

“Yes, Alice, I presume I must be.”

“Then let me say adieu to you here. Good-bye ; God bless and protect you !” She held out her hand, smiled through her tears, and hurried from the room. Tom stepped into his carriage an hour or two later ; his feelings were difficult to define : altogether he was a happy man.

Charlie remained at Brain Lees Manor, working with a savage determination only known to military candidates. It was thought desirable, about this time, that he should take a preliminary canter.

“Well, that’s very good,” said the captain, one morning, after perusing an examination paper, of which he was himself profoundly ignorant. “Very good.” The captain was surrounded with books, and considered himself safe.

Casting a furtive glance at a Chepmell, he asked, in an important tone, “Who was Richard the Second ?”

“Son of the Black Prince,” said Charlie, who had really attained a considerable knowledge of the History of England, by dint of hard work. “Son of the Black Prince.”

As this might be true or not, Old Armstrong did not venture to contradict or assent, but immediately read from the book, “He thought it unsafe to leave his nephews alive, and they were secretly murdered in the Tower.”

“Bless my soul, sir, what a mistake I made !” said a bright genius called Fothergill ; “I thought that was the crook-backed tyrant that Shakespeare and Pickwick wrote about.”

“Oh ! ah ! yes, yes, to be sure ; I meant to say Richard III, of course : what was I thinking about ?”

“What was the Battle of the Boyne about ?” asked Charlie in the innocence of his ignorance.

“Oh ! the Boyne : the Boyne’s in Ireland, you know,” rejoined the tutor.

“Yes ; but what was the battle about ? who fought it ?”

“Oh, it was a battle of parties—all those battles were—

Charles and the Roundheads. I suppose your Latin's all right, Mr. Thornhill?"

"Well, I believe I know enough to get some marks above the minimum; but if you'll just run through the grammar here and there, and then pick out half a dozen passages of Virgil——" Armstrong turned purple.

"Certainly; only, just now, suppose we go on with the English and the History." Just then in came Cantabs, who, if not very learned, had studied the art of cramming to some purpose. "When do you go up, Mr. Thornhill?"

"Next week."

"You know your French?"

"Yes; I can translate it: not very good at the grammar—pronunciation horrible," replied Charlie.

"Ah, that doesn't signify. Latin?"

"Pretty fair: they flogged something into me."

"Euclid and arithmetic?"

"Three books, and all right up to quadratics."

"What are you most afraid of?"

"English," said the dunce: "they ask such odd questions."

"So they do. It's understood that nobody can answer them, excepting Max Müller, and he's a German. As long as you can spell well, and write a goodish essay, it will do. When you're doubtful about a word, write illegibly. The prisoner has the benefit of the doubt. There's your history and geography. They're pretty good, I think. You'll get through. They're sure to ask (just take a paper and put them down) the descent of Victoria from James I, the sovereigns of Tudor—why they were more despotic than their predecessors (I told you the other day)—Marlborough's battles, Charles I, the Boyne, the four R's, Edward I and III, and Henry IV and V; and remember a weak king generally comes between two strong ones—Strongbow, Simon de Montfort, Warwick, Cranmer, Melancthon, Walpole, Pulteney, Chatham, Pitt, Fox, Liverpool, Burke, (you'll have to write a life of some of those in something under twenty minutes), Aden, Delhi, Pulopenang, Mauritius, and the military stations. Oh! and don't forget the two Johnsons."

"Just tell us the difference now."

"One is Ben, and spells his name without an *h*; the other is Samuel, and spells his name with one. We'll look when they lived another time. I'm hanged if I know. Come in."

"Second-post letters," said a boy in buttons, not dirtier than

they usually are. Why do not the middle classes employ female labour for all domestic offices? Cleanliness, good-humour, and good looks, instead of dirt, idleness, and impertinence.

"Here they are," said Smith, the ex-Harrovian, taking them from the willing hand of the youth, who retired: "there's one for you, Fothergill, and two for Thornhill; and here's 'Bell's Life' of last week and 'Baily.'"

The party were instantly immersed in their letters or their newspapers; and Charlie's contained something which startled him.

The first was simple enough: it was from Sam Downy, and gave the latest intelligence in the fewest possible letters.

"HONOR'D SIR,

"The orse is well. We no all about it. Mum's the word, as we wont to ketch the rogues. More by-and-by.

"Yours to command,

"S. DOWNY."

The next letter was less expected: it was from his uncle, Henry Thornhill, from Pall Mall. It also went the shortest way to its object.

"HAMMERTON & Co., PALL MALL.

"MY DEAR CHARLES,

"A friend of mine is very desirous of seeing you in London on business of importance to yourself. You will find him to morrow before 10 A.M. at ——— Street. After that at Mint, Chalkstone, Palmer, and Co.'s bank, East Goldbury, City. Ask for Mr. Roger Palmer when you send in your card. I believe his business is very important to you. You can call on me afterwards if I can be of any use; and you will find your friend, Lady Marston, in Town, who will be glad to see you. Adieu.

"Yours affectionately,

"HENRY THORNHILL."

"P.S.—Your father was a friend of Roger Palmer's, and once did him a service almost irredeemable."

That evening Charlie Thornhill was in London at his old quarters, Sir Frederick Marston's, where he underwent a little badinage on the subject of his military knowledge, but with a tolerable assurance that he was well worthy of his aspirations.

Some men lead a forlorn hope, and others arrive at the Garter without it. Immortality is the lot of both.

Charlie was on his way to East Goldbury by twelve o'clock, and reached it about half-past one. He was not kept waiting. The little man sat in a comfortable inner room, with "The Times" over his knee, and warming himself by a good fire. He rose to salute Charlie, offered him a chair, and again sat down.

"Mr. Thornhill, I have no personal acquaintance with you, but your poor father was once the means of doing me so essential a service, at some risk and inconvenience to himself, that it will add sincerely to my pleasure if you can entertain the proposition I am about to make to you, for my partners and myself. You'll take a biscuit and a glass of old Madeira?" Here he rang the bell. "How did you come?"

"I walked from Grosvenor Square." Roger Palmer gave a satisfactory grunt: it was indicative of energy, one of his virtues.

He then detailed to him, that from the large Continental business they were doing, it was considered necessary to send a gentleman, not as a mere clerk, but almost as a partner. That a knowledge of French and arithmetic was necessary, and that German should be added to it: as, on the return to England, the youngest partner would have this part of the business to transact. That every facility would be given, as it was proposed that the gentleman to go out should be a bachelor, and reside in the family of the senior correspondent in Frankfort. That a handsome income, increasing according to circumstances, would be given; and that at the expiration of a certain term of years, the gentleman would be received as a partner in the house in England without any further premium or advance of money in any way. "In short," said the little man—and he had a struggle about telling or concealing it—"the income and the partnership will be yours by right, as I have myself advanced the needful. There, sir," said Roger Palmer, wiping his glasses, which had become a little dim, "there's a fortune for you, let me tell you, such as your ancestor may have had when he built Thornhills."

Charlie was so astounded by the unexpected nature of the proposal, that he could do nothing more than stammer out his thanks; but after a minute's hesitation the money part of the transaction seemed the most incomprehensible. He was anything but a man of business; but he knew quite enough to be well

assured that such an offer was not obtained without a very large sum of ready money ; such a sum, indeed, as it became him to reject at the hands of a stranger. He had a very proper pride, and the expression of it only endorsed Roger Palmer's determination in his behalf.

"Then you can't or won't see that obligations may arise between men which renders any future relations between their families quite extraordinary."

"I don't say that ; but I have not lived, even to my age, Mr. Palmer, not to know that the obligation I place myself under to you is immense, and that I, at least, have no claim upon your bounty. There's my brother."

"Your brother, sir, ought to have enough ; besides, the 'wind bloweth where it listeth,' and I desire to confer this, not as a present, but as a recompense for the work you will have to do, and the benefit we shall derive from it. Come, look on it in that light."

"I can't look on it in anything but its true light—a sense of obligation to a stranger. Excuse my saying so ; but you know what I mean."

"You are proud, young man."

"Perhaps I am : it is a pride that I hope will keep me from doing what I can scarcely approve."

"Will you reserve your answer for three days, and consult your uncle and your best and most intelligent friends ?"

Charlie hesitated, looked at Roger Palmer's face, and said, "I will."

"Then take another glass of Madeira, and adieu. Bless my soul alive," said the banker, as Charlie descended the steps of Messrs. Mint, Chalkstone, and Co., "I've more difficulty in getting rid of twenty thousand pounds than I ever had in making double the money."

Charlie called in Pall Mall. He detailed the whole conversation to his uncle.

"Can you translate French tolerably ?"

"I think I can now."

"And do a sum in arithmetic ?"

"Certainly."

"And don't care about being a gentleman and a dependent for the next forty years ?"

"If coupled, it would be singularly distasteful to me," said our hero.

"And you came here to ask my advice with a view to weighing it?"

"Most undoubtedly, my dear uncle." Charlie laughed.

"Well, you know, very few people do. Then you shall have it. Accept his offer."

Lady Marston and Sir Frederick dined at home. Charlie gave a succinct account of his visit in the City. "And now, Sir Frederick, what am I to do?"

"I know the circumstances of the case, and you need have no scruples in accepting the partnership, or anything else. They owe their existence to your father's generosity and confidence. They were at their last gasp when your father, with scarcely a hope of saving them, and knowing full well their position, ordered every farthing he could command, besides a large sum which he borrowed, to be paid into their bank. It stopped the panic, and was the means of saving them. Accept it by all means."

"Frederick, nonsense—impossible! I've been down to the Horse Guards, and had a long chat with General Bosville; and he has promised me the first cornetcy in the household troops for Charlie. I shall break my heart if I don't see him in his uniform. I meant to have taken him to the drawing-room in your place—you know you dislike it—and now he's to be a banker. Never mind, Charlie, we'll have you in Parliament. It's absurd throwing away six feet two and so much common sense on a back parlour in Lombard Street."

"Then I'm still to be a soldier, Lady Marston," said Charlie, laughing.

"Well, that depends entirely upon your own inclination. If you like a life varying between Windsor and London, and all the pleasures which accompany a charming mess, the most intellectual conversation, champagne *bien frappée*, the idolatry of the queen's balls, parades, operas, clubs, and bachelorhood, by all means. But if you desire to put yourself in the way of doing a good work, or following a useful calling; of assisting your fellow-creatures; of becoming a really valuable member of society; and of bringing up a family after you, also to do the work properly that God sets them upon earth, then——"

"Ah! I see; I must go to Frankfort: so I accept to-morrow."

It was three weeks later in the year, and Charlie was to start on his new career very shortly. Arrangements had been made; and he was to open his life at Frankfort-on-the-Maine under the

auspices of Herr Schlösser, Winkleman, and Co., and in the house of the former.

It was a dreary, drizzling afternoon when Charlie took his seat in the train for Dunham Heath Lodge, the residence of Samuel Downy. The crisis was come : in three days' time the race was to be run ; and the horse was to be moved across the country to-morrow or next day. To-night the attack must come ; and the information was to be relied on.

When Charlie arrived he found one of the boys at the station to carry his bag, with Mr. Downy's favourite hack at his service. That gentleman thought himself best at home under the circumstances. When he reached the lodge it was quite clear that good counsel had been kept. Even Mrs. Downy herself knew nothing about it. Her cap, or pagoda, or structure of whatever kind, was as brilliant as ever ; her smile as unfettered, her buttered toast equally good ; and the roast fowl and egg-sauce got expressly for Charlie Thornhill, was not the cuisine of a lady tormented with doubts, or ill at ease in her mind.

"The horse looks beautiful, sir," said she. "Lor ! what dangerous work that steeple-chasing is, to be sure. One day here, another there. Perhaps the poor thing may kill himself, for all his good looks. Downy often says he wishes you gentlemen would stick to the flat. He says that's a duty you owe to your country, but the other isn't."

Downy was evidently big with the cares of state ; and well he might be. He had one policeman locked in an empty stable on one side, well supplied with beef and beer. Another policeman in an outhouse on the other side, also revelling in beef and beer, of which Downy himself had the key. And he had a third policeman, who had already partaken of hot gin and water, who was waiting in the little thicket at the back of the box in which *Cedipus* stood. All this had been done without Mrs. Downy's knowledge. What a clever fellow was Sam Downy !

"The time is to be midnight, Mr. Charles. We've made the boy safe ; and as there's a little moonlight just then, we shall be able to see enough for our business." With this Sam Downy lit his pipe, Charlie his cigar ; Mrs. Downy brewed some hot whisky and water, and then took to knitting, which shortly ended in a comfortable nap. Her better half soon followed her example. "My dear," said he, waking suddenly up, "I think you'd better go to bed ;" and to bed she went.

At half-past eleven Sam Downy led his guest mysteriously

across the yard. First he unlocked Policeman 1's box, then Policeman 2's box, proceeding cautiously to the rendezvous with Policeman 3. "There, sir, they won't show fight; but you'd better take the life preserver, in case of accidents. Rogues are always cowards."

They had been in their hiding-place not more than half an hour when they heard stealthy steps crossing an open patch of heath between the back of the stables and the country. Just then a cloud cleared away from before the waning moon, and they saw three figures, a boy and two men, crouching along the ground towards the yard, which was here open to the country. They crept slowly forward, passing within the shadow of the copse. Charlie longed to give a war-whoop and be at them, but was restrained by Downy, who rightly judged that the "ketching the rogues" was of the first importance. They allowed them, therefore, to continue their serpentine path along the side of the building, until they had turned the corner. Following them then as stealthily, they reached the angle in time to see the key applied to the lock. It turned without noise, and silently the two entered, whilst the boy remained without. At that moment a policeman appeared on each side; the boy became a willing prisoner; a very dim light scarcely shone in the stable; and Charlie, Downy, and their companions had already their hands upon the latch, when a fearful scream woke the silence of the night, and pushing open the door, they beheld a scene of terror, which we reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PREPARATION.

"Shall I not take mine ease in mine own inn?"

THREE days later (and the winter was far advanced) the silent little town of Sedgeley was all alive. Sedgeley was one of those places that had been spoilt by a small aristocracy. A potent lawyer; a real physician with an Edinburgh diploma and nine daughters; a rector, who had been senior proctor; two medical

practitioners ; and a wealthy banker, who combined with his usury the advantages of chief linendraper of the place,—had set their faces against railway intrusion. It was not to be, and it was not. The consequence was that a thriving town, of four thousand inhabitants, with a roaring trade in penny whistles, came to nothing. With a melancholy sigh, as they met on the market hill, Judkins the watchmaker would expatiate to the new curate upon the former glories of his native town. He would tell him how twenty-four coaches, besides the great North mail, changed horses at the “Saracen’s Head” every day. And indeed he said truly. There were nice little suppers, and whist and oyster parties, among the topping tradesmen, who were all well-to-do, for the place was constantly full of customers. There were snug dinners among the would-be-aristocrats : and a great deal of jealousy when Sir Charles Trimmer invited the doctor, but forgot the lawyer, or *vice versâ*. It is but fair to say that they all came in turn ; for as he was member for that side of the county, and politics in Sedgeley depended entirely upon the digestion, Sir Charles never forgot anybody who could enjoy a dinner at all, provided only that he possessed the requisite qualification. Now, however, all this was gone. The rail had been strenuously opposed, and in return had carried its passengers and its traffic, at four miles’ distance, to the next market-town ; and nobody seemed to care much about penny whistles—at least not sufficiently to come out of the way for them.

In the midst of this dearth of riches or amusement Sedgeley had become eminently dull, save on one or two occasions. Once a year there was a ball, and the principal room at the “Saracen’s Head” was still in request. Whenever the hounds met within two or three miles (for Sedgeley was in one of the best hunting counties in England) all the idlers became busy. The landladies put on their best caps, and the ostlers were ready for any little odd jobs that might turn up on such an occasion. There might be a marriage once or twice in the year, which sent half a dozen extra people into the street, or to the church, and a funeral or two ; but the inhabitants had no real taste for gorgeous solemnity. Sir Charles Trimmer might have died himself, and there would scarcely have been a respectable house to welcome his hearse and coaches. The present occasion was not of that sort. Something more than common brought down Mrs. Bustleton, with a wonderfully smart cap, at four o’clock, into the bar. It was neither a funeral nor a wedding that

produced a ringing of bells, and a rustling of chambermaids and cherry-coloured ribbons, on so sombre an afternoon ; and when Ramsbotham the saddler rushed into the inn-yard with an old but very good-looking saddle on his arm, to which he had been doing something, quite a crowd of inquisitive boys and lazy apprentices surrounded the gateway of the "Saracen's Head." However, Ramsbotham was not a man to satisfy anybody but a customer or a creditor ; and as to Tony, the one-eyed ostler, he saw more and said less than any man in Sedgeley. It was noised abroad that there was one of the horses already in the yard. The blacksmith had been consulted by the groom, a very superior sort of person, it was said, on the subject of a shoe, or a boot, nobody knew which ; but what shape, size, or colour he might be was no more conjectured than if he had been smuggled in in a bandbox. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico.* Those who had not seen him, and knew nothing at all about him, already declared he must win ; and not a few of them backed their opinion that night at the "Cocked Hat and Teapot," one of the most sporting little cribs in the place.

"Well, Margaret," said Mrs. Bustleton, between mouthfuls of hot muffin to her sister, "I wonder the gentlemen don't come in. It's past five, and I'm sure they can't see to hunt."

"P'raps they've gone the other way, you know ; and then they'd have a good ways to come home. I heerd Tony say there was a good many 'orses already in ; and I dessay the place 'ull be quite full to-morrow."

"Yes, we must have the ordinary in the big room, after the race. Sir Charles must take the chair, and Mr. Thornhill and Mr. Dacre must sit on each side of him, I suppose. The rest must sit as they can."

"I thought the other gentleman, Mr. Somebody Brown, ought to sit on the other side."

"Bother Mr. Somebody Brown, Margaret ; how you talk ! He don't belong to the county. We'll have Mr. Thornhill, and Mr. Dacre, if he comes, or some of our own people, and Mr. Charles Thornhill, all up at the top—— Lor ! there's a fly." And true enough, after paying the fly and the driver, a tall, well-made man, in rough coat and comforter, opened the door, and stood unceremoniously in the badly-lighted corner of the bar-parlour.

"Why, bless me ! it's Mr. Charles," said Mrs. Bustleton, colouring, and wiping her hands on her handkerchief.

"Right, Mrs. Bustleton," said he stretching out a hand, and advancing to the fire; "let me warm myself a moment. I hope you are quite well, and the children?"

"All well, thank you, sir; and Mrs. Thornhill, and your brother, sir? We don't see so much of you as we did once, when you were boys, and used to ride over on your ponies. How's Miss Stanhope, too, sir? I hear she's a great deal with Mrs. Thornhill. But there's your room ready, sir, with a capital fire: isn't there, Margaret?"

"Thank you." But Charlie stood with his back to the fire, a little preoccupied. "And what time do we dine?"

"Seven o'clock, sir. You'll take a biscuit and a glass of sherry, Mr. Charles?"

"How many was dinner ordered for, Mrs. Bustleton?"

"Six, sir, I understood. There's Mr. Tom, and yourself, and Lord Carisbrook, and Captain Charteris, and Mr. Stapleton, and some one else; but I didn't hear who. P'raps you'd like a cup o' tea, sir?" Here Mrs. Bustleton made an attempt to squeeze the pot.

Charlie still looked down thoughtfully. "Is Mr. Downy here with the horse?"

Mrs. Bustleton rang a bell, which summoned the one-eyed ostler. "Tony, is Mr. Downy here with Mr. Thornhill's horse?"

"No, mum—leastways, sir," said Tony, first to his mistress and then to her guest. "No, sir; he's coming this evening. The head man's here."

"Send him to my room." And Charlie having picked up his overcoat and shawl, walked out of the bar, ushered by a tallow candle and bunch of cherry-coloured ribbons. "Come in," and William entered and the girl went out.

"How did the horse come?"

"He never was better, sir. It's my opinion he can't lose, if he don't make a mistake."

"But they do make mistakes sometimes—all of them: however, that's as fair, for one as the other. How's the country?"

"A little sticky, sir; just suit the old horse, I should say."

"I don't know: the mare's a thorough-bred one, and can stay."

"Well, *Œdipus* must be thorough-bred too, sir."

"He's not in the Stud-book. But how's the poor fellow!"

"Not so well, sir. He's been a bit delirious—talks a bit, sir.

They couldn't keep his bandages on last night. The man's, you know, sir."

"But they don't think very badly of him?"

"Oh! no, sir; I didn't hear as they did." And here William scraped himself out of the room.

Charlie Thornhill looked at the parlour. It was a comfortably furnished room, with a good fire, and a dinner-table laid for six. He remembered it well. It was the room in which he and his brother met on the day of their eventful journey after the death of their father. He had been several times at the hotel since, which was only ten miles from Thornhills, but he had never been in that identical room till now. He looked at the pictures. They were the same. There was the famous American trotter, with the wonderful dog-cart, which looked like a wheeled spider. There was the late Mr. Bustleton, a short, red-faced man, in a dress coat and waistcoat, with his hands by his side; and staring at him—as he well might be—was a most extraordinary painting of his brown horse Solomon, the most striking points of which were the biggest head and the shortest tail in England. There was the Prodigal Son, with a hole in his hat, with nothing on but a shirt and a pair of knee-breeches, being welcomed by his father in a flowing wig and a court sword. His brother looks on in gloomy silence, while a groom in a blue livery leads a couple of saddle-horses up and down in front of the house. The butcher in the distance is sharpening his knife ready for the calf, which has not yet left her mother's side.

The door opened, and the same cherry-coloured ribbons appeared with a lamp. She was followed by a heavy footstep and the smell of tobacco. Tom Thornhill came in, and shook his brother by the hand heartily. Then came Lord Carlingford and Harry Stapleton.

"Charmed to see you, Charlie. How are the nerves?"

"All right, thank you. What sport to-day?"

"Very moderate. We found at Dodford, and went down to Norton: it's a wretched scenting country. We got on better terms with him after crossing Sedgely road, but we lost him at Driffeld. I suppose *Oedipus* is all right, notwithstanding the reports in town?" said Stapleton.

"What reports?"

"Oh! I don't know exactly; but they offered me three ponies to one against him yesterday. I was such a fool as not to take it, thinking there might be something wrong; and then

we got the newspaper account of the skirmish. I suppose you had a horrid row at Dunham? They've committed them."

"Well! yes, we had, rather. Tom, if you fellows don't dress, we shall have the dinner up directly." And they all four adjourned to their rooms.

When they met again, Charteris and Baron Hartzstein had joined them. They sat down to a severe soup, fish, leg of mutton, and beefsteak pudding sort of dinner. They washed it down with some warm sherry, and ordered up some claret. Tom Thornhill's name was sufficient to get, at all events, the best the house afforded; and it may be remarked that gentlemen are the most easily satisfied, and the least preposterous in their requirements, of any class of persons. If I hear of an extravagant order in the way of dinner or wines at a plain country inn, I feel satisfied that, nine times out of ten, the consumer is a snob, and a savage delight comes over me that he is pretty certain to have everything as bad as it can be. Away from home the "mensa tripes" should be the rule.

"Capital mutton, Thornhill," said Lord Carlingford, with his mouth full.

"Yes: but not so good as the Southdown. We feed a few at Thornhills for ourselves."

"And they cost us about eighteenpence a pound," said Charlie, who had no opinion of amateur farming as a speculation.

"Who shows the ground to-morrow!" said Tom Thornhill.

"I do," replied Captain Charteris, "with Vincent of the 12th. He's coming with Robinson Brown in the morning. How much he's improved in his riding this last season or two! He's so much better a horseman than he was."

"By-the-by, Thornhill, you were going to tell us about the row at Dunham, and the attempt on your horse."

"Charlie knows all about it; he was there: not I."

It must have become evident by this time that one of Charlie Thornhill's besetting sins was his modesty. If he had to tell a story of which he was the hero, he made nothing of it. He loved a short cut to anything, and would gladly have said nothing more about the business. He seemed perfectly content that the horse was safe, and the perpetrators on the road to punishment.

"Let's have it, Charlie," said Tom. "I've hardly heard it properly myself yet."

"Oh! it's nothing particular. We found out that something

was going wrong, so old Downy set a trap for the fellows, and caught them."

"But wasn't there something about Œdipus eating one of the fellows?"

"Well! not exactly: Œdipus is quiet enough. It seems that Downy had got a new boy, who mistook his orders. The boy ought to have changed that savage horse of Martin's—Homicide they call him—to an empty box: but he made a mistake, and put Œdipus into the empty box, and Homicide into our horse's place. They're not very unlike; and when Downy went round he never saw the mistake."

"Well! but what happened?"

"Oh! nothing particular," said Charlie, helping himself to sherry; "we followed the men into the box without their knowing it. The horse was loose; and before we could get into the place, he rushed at one of the fellows, knocked him down, and seized him by his side with his teeth. Luckily, Downy was there, and got him off, by one or two violent blows on the nose; but the fellow was picked up half dead. He has broken several ribs, and his side is terribly lacerated; but I hope he'll get better. The other fellow is remanded, and will be committed, of course."

"Where's the wounded prisoner? He won't get off, will he?"

"Certainly not. There's a policeman sleeps in the room. But he can't be moved; and Downy's man says he's not so well to-day."

"So nothing at all happened to your horse?"

"He wasn't in the box at all."

"What a fool I was to let those three ponies slip, to be sure;" and the recollection seemed to make a profound impression on Stapleton, who asked for the claret. "And what are they going to do with Martin's horse, the Homicide?"

"Make a watch-dog of him, I should think," replied the Dunce of the Family.

Tom Thornhill rang the bell, and ordered some cards and a backgammon board. Before long he and his friends had thrown some mains; and now that the Devil had once got possession, he armed himself to keep it.

"Come, Charlie, one main?"

"No! no!" laughed Charlie; "not I. You know I never play. Besides I'm going to bed." This was a wise measure for a fool.

"Bed ! what, at ten o'clock ? Smoke a cigar : here's a capital one."

"No, thank you : smoking at night's a bad thing for the nerves ; and I've got all your money on my shoulders. You'd better let me go to bed."

"He carries Cæsar and his fortunes. Well ! good night ; and good luck to-morrow."

"Good night." And then the play went on more and more furiously. And these bosom friends forgot each other, and gloated over their own interests. There is a substance and there is a shadow—of generosity. The substance is the habit of mind, the shadow is the impulse. The one costs much, the other little ; but the former shines with but little lustre before the world. Perhaps the world's eyes are not yet attuned to seeing in the dark. Be that as it may, the gambler has a reputation for generosity. He has the impulse, and grasps at the shadow. The substance is too hard for him. Not all this, but something like it, ran through Charlie Thornhill's mind as he heard the silence below him, only heightened by the clang of the dice.

"Ruined ! irretrievably ruined !" said Prodigus, as he turned from the inquirer to conceal his emotion.

"Are you, by—— ? I'll lay you a hundred to twenty of that," returned his most intimate friend.

A gambler never understands ruin till it stares him in the face, and then he strives to stare it out of countenance. We all harden in time : but there's no fire like the dice-box. Wife, child, self, soul, are all too light to put in the balance with the turn of a card. Oh ! Alice, Alice ! what an intuitive knowledge of the world for one so innocent and so young !

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE WALK OVER, AND THE RACE.

"*Si sors ista dedit nobis, sors ispa gubernat.*"

CHARLIE slept well (it was his custom,) when he got rid of his waking dreams about gambling. There was always one figure which occupied the principal part of the picture. Tom was altering : not to him, nor to his mother. Still he had become

capricious in his moods. He wanted constant society : before, he liked it, but was equally cheerful without. It seemed as though he were putting a good face on something, but did not feel it the less. Why in the world didn't he marry ?

They were all off to look at the ground. Four miles from Sedgeley, on the Croppington road, equally convenient for Robinson Brown, who had a box for the season, not half a mile off, and for the Thornhills, who lived in the county, ten miles from Sedgeley. Charlie drove out in a fly with Charteris, Lord Carlingford, and his brother. He intended walking the course. Vincent and Robinson Brown were at the public before them, with a couple of hacks. Lord Carlingford's man had horses there for the others. Three accepted them, but Charlie adhered to his opinion and his legs. He was essentially a shooting-boot style of man. Robinson Brown was patent leather all over. A man's character almost always resembles his boots.

The ground was already marked out with flags. It was plain and broad, as another path is said to be. A good four miles of it.

"The riders will keep the flags to their right hands, if you please," said Vincent, who was an excellent judge of such matters. "It will be found a fair hunting country. You can go anywhere to the left of the flags, so that you may have a choice of places."

Two or three gates let the horsemen in, whilst Charlie surveyed them on foot with a critical eye. The first four or five were good hunting fences, with nothing remarkable, and as easily seen from a pony as any other way. Then came a cramped place—the ground a little raised before taking off.

"Not to be ridden at too fast," said Charlie to himself ; "and to be sure to get close up to it."

"That's an easy fly," said Robinson Brown, from his hack. "A donkey could do that."

"Here's the water, Charlie. It's a fair jump everywhere ; but the banks are rather higher in some places than others above the water."

Charlie stood between two willows, and measured it with his eye. "What's the width, Tom ?"

"Width ? Oh ! 'pon my word, hav'n't the slightest idea. You'd better ask the depth, Charlie. It looks quite big enough to get into."

"Not with Œdipus. I think I could jump it myself."

"Very likely," said Carlingford; "but that won't win the match. Come on. There's nothing but grass up to here, and the next field is the only bit of plough in the race." And on they went, smoking and laughing, till they came to a ridge or furrow of more than ordinary inequality. It was almost like the sea, and "A man overboard!" would not have sounded very *mal-apropos* in it. The way out of this difficulty was over a good stiff double post and rails. There was no room to land between, and it must be done at a fly.

"A most unmistakable cropper," said Charlie again to himself, "out of such a field as that."

Robinson Brown was chatting away with his friends, and surveying the scene with considerable *nonchalance*, seeing that he was going to play a prominent part in the drama to be enacted shortly. Either he had great confidence in himself, or his mare, or his luck, for the course was a decidedly stiff one, and nothing short of a fatalist could have regarded the last field and fence with indifference.

"Brown, that's a big 'un," said Wilbraham, a good sportsman, and one of the leading men with the county hounds.

"Wather, ya-a s. A-should say a wegular yawner."

"Deucedly like himself. Near relatives. I hope they'll agree." The speaker had backed the mare for a hundred, and called the owner's attention to an obstacle or two, which seemed to escape him. "What did you think of the water? I suppose the mare is pretty good at that."

"Water? Oh! ah!—the bwook. Ya-a-s; to be sure."

"Yes, the brook. You saw it, I suppose? Because you'd better canter back if you didn't. That's all."

"Ya-a-s, I saw it. I call it a wavine. It's a jump."

"Jump; indeed, it is a jump!" added his backer, in hopes of reviving either his spirits or his attention, "It's not unlike a family vault. You won't get out in a hurry, if you once get in,"

"Jump or vault, Weluctance will do it, Basset,

* Wise from the gwound like fwathered Mercuwy,
And vaulted with such ease—'

Your hundwed's safe enough." And on they went. Beyond this the fences were fair hunting fences—timber occasionally; a thick bullfinch here and there, interspersed with a little child's play; and a second arm of the same brook, but by no means a formidable place. They were nearing the finish, and had passed about

five-and-twenty fences, when a flag, placed on a high bank over which it was impossible to see, attracted universal attention.

"Hallo, Charteris. What's this?" shouted the owner of *Cedipus*.

"That's a bank," said the Captain. "A new line of rail coming."

"Then I hope it will break before these fellows get to it ; that's all."

"If they don't like it they can go round. But I'm going to explain for Vincent and myself. We were ordered to pick four miles of hunting country, and we agreed that that bank was an obstacle which might present itself whenever the hounds run across here. Besides it's as fair for one as the other. If Brown don't object ——"

"What do you say, Charlie? Capital place to see it from."

"Excuse me, Thornhill," said Vincent, "but you don't understand that if they don't like it they can go round. It only extends to the next fence, and on the other side of it there's a regular passage through, which brings them into the straight running again. It's rather out of the way, but not above a hundred yards or so."

In the meantime the whole party rode to the top (the ascent was not very steep) to inspect the slope on the other side. It was an awkward-looking drop. The ground shelved at considerably less than an angle of forty-five degrees. It was about thirty feet high, and being covered with a stunted herbage, looked slippery in the extreme. It was about one hundred yards shorter in distance, and there was a saving of one very easy fence in the corner of the field, immediately under the bank. As there was an alternative, to be easily adopted by either or both, nothing more was said on the subject. The remaining fences had been inspected and approved of ; and as the course was arranged so as to form a semicircle, it was not a difficult one for the spectators. A large pink flag was carefully placed in every hedgerow, and the top of the bank was so conspicuous an object that it served for an excellent landmark for at least a mile beforehand. The time was getting on—one o'clock—and the start to take place at two—or as soon after as gentlemen can get into their breeches. They all turned towards the little village inn from which they had started, where carpet-bags, portmanteaus, horses, flys, grooms, and the various types of the fine old English farmer, had collected in great number.

"Well, Charlie, what do you think of the course?" said Tom Thornhill, whilst his brother pushed himself into a thinner and tighter pair of breeches than usual, and proceeded to pull on the very neatest pair of tops possible.

"Very good course. That's a sticker, that bank, you know. I suppose we shall both go round," said Charlie.

"Most likely. If there had not been a road on the other side of the fence, I should have objected."

"I am glad you didn't. It's a hunter's course, after all ; and I dare say many a horse would go down safe enough. Shy us that boot."

"Don't put that jacket on ; here's a purple and white stripe," said Tom again, tossing him one from the chair-back in the room.

"What an odd fellow Tom is ! Who'd have thought it ? I wonder whether he likes the girl. I once heard Alice Dacre say something about——" And Charlie began to brush his back hair, preparatory to the cap.

"Now, Charlie, come on : there goes Robinson Brown." Tom was flushed and preoccupied when they got down ; and Charlie began to think it was an object to him to win this match, independently of the original bet.

He went down stairs slowly, as men must in boots and spurs, covered over with a light great coat of approved fashion. He found half the county ready to shake hands with him. It was a non-hunting day, and everybody within distance had come to see it. The betting was even—if anything, a turn in favour of *Œdipus* : a sort of reaction, after his knocking out. Or was it Charlie's jockeyship ?

The crowd below was thick and anxious ; and the heroes of the day were not likely to be more than an hour late at the starting-post ; in fact, it was only half-past two o'clock, and they were already on their hacks, and starting for the post. To judge by the crowd that accompanied them, and the crowd that was already gone before, steeple-chasing was in the ascendant in the neighbourhood of Sedgely. All the farmers' wives and daughters were there in frys, four-wheelers, dog-carts, and carts taxed and untaxed of every description. There were the county members, with their wives and their sons and their sons' wives, one in a barouche, the other, the younger, and more dashing, in a mail phaeton ; his private brougham, too, was drawn up behind him near the winning-post. The member for Cropping-

ton was there too, on a clever hack ; and the Master of the Hounds. Upon this occasion they were on the most friendly terms : as a rule, politics divided them. A goodly company planted itself at the brook—decidedly the most sporting lot—and I must confess there is something sublimely pleasant in seeing another man get a ducking. It beats all dry falling into fits. At other misfortunes one grieves, as applying the Aristotelian theory to one's self, that it may be our own case. But whether we are so satisfied of deserving to be hanged, or from what cause soever I know not, the risk of drowning never affrights us in the case of a brother sportsman's mishap. So many hoped for a catastrophe, and remained at the brook to see. The post and rails were also a pet place ; it numbered some of the ladies, who are always kindly and tenderly placed at the spot most favourable to accident. Besides the county families, the members of the neighbouring hunts, and the farmers and sporting tradesmen, there was a strong London division, who were pecuniarily interested in the affair. In a word, for a private match, not supposed to excite particular interest out of the county, it was the most marvellous success that had been known for years.

We have already stated that Tom Thornhill's colours were purple and white stripe ; Robinson Brown sported all white. Cédipus was a magnificent dark-brown horse, of great power ; but he has been already described. Reluctance was a racing-looking mare, a good golden chestnut, showing fast speed, and low and long. They were both capable of crossing any country and their condition almost unexceptionable. The horse for choice in this respect ; the mare a little too fine. She had, however, a great turn of speed.

They are off ! Charlie would willingly have made running at his own pace : he could depend upon his horse to stay, and he suspected a turn of speed in the mare. Reluctance, however, was too fresh to be steadied at once, at least by Robinson Brown, and the running to the first fence was in his hands, I might say out of them. Charlie watched him, as did many more. Away they went, the mare lurching at her bridle, and her rider sitting a little uncomfortably, to all appearance. Now her head was down, now up, and his hands were evidently full. Cédipus was fresh, but was held together in a manner that told him pretty plainly he had his master on his back. Charlie had the inside, and steered close to the flags. He remembered every fence, and

knew pretty well where to have them. Robinson Brown was not a bad man on a good horse, a hunter ; but the mare was fresh, and he was up in his stirrups, and obliged to go faster than he liked. The first fence was nothing extraordinary ; but he went at it faster than he ought to have gone. Charlie sat down on his horse closely, just easing his quarters, and as near the middle of the saddle as need be. His power over his horse was manifest ; and *Cedipus* gave him a good hold of his head. "Steady !" said he, as the horse became excited by seeing the mare in front, and hearing the crowd behind. Crash, smash, flop, went the amateurs in the rear. They were well after him, but not anxious to show him the way. The white gates, which ran nearly parallel with the line, were of great service to the ladies, and to not a few of the gentlemen. The fourth field was ridge and furrow, and the mare began to settle. Robinson Brown is no great favourite of ours ; but he was not a fool in the saddle, and began to be more at ease. He still had to look back for Charlie, who kept his own line, at six or eight lengths behind. They were coming to the cramped fence, with a suspicious bank in front. "I thought so," said the Dunce to himself ; "steady, *Cedipus* !" and he dropped his forelegs just in the right place, and landed well, as Reluctance pulled her hind leg out of the ditch, and shot Robinson Brown a little too forward to be elegant. There was no fall, however, and they were again side by side. "Well saved," said the crowd. "She's a quick 'un," thought Charlie, "and won't fall for want of a leg to spare." The horses now went stride for stride by one another ; and the riders eyed each other. Like two of Homer's heroes, they looked for a hole, but the joints of the harness were well riveted ; no weak spot was perceptible. The crowd was silent enough. No incident, no fun, nobody down yet. The ponies and hacks had turned aside and sought a shorter and safer cut to the water or to the goal. The Master of the Hounds, Lord Carlingford, Tom Thornhill, and a cavalry officer or two, were within half a field ; the rest sadly tailing. The pace had been good ; but both horses held their own. The line of willows appeared in the distance, and crash went the rotten wood of an old pleached fence, with the ditch on the taking off side. The mare cleared it all, and was a length into the next field before *Cedipus*. "Bravo ! that's the way to do it," said a warm-hearted tenant of old Robinson Brown, from the bough of a tree, who owed a half-year's rent, and wanted a new barn ; "the young master wins

for a hundred." Nobody took him : there was nothing on his bough up to that mark. "I'll lay you five shillin' on the squire's brother, Measter Chanticleer," said one of the Thornhill party. "Lor ! bless you," added the old sportsman, "see how he handles his horse : he's a savin' him for the water ; we ought to ha' been theare." In the meantime they were nearing the brook, and a low fence and ditch brought them into the very field. Charlie marked his spot at once, and Robinson Brown, in advance about six lengths, diverged a little to the left, looking at what he imagined to be an easy place. It was not so big, but the ground was low on the taking off side, and the water was shallower, having fallen over an artificial dam. The mare put back her ears, and went round like a shot. The first refusal ; but no blood drawn. Robinson Brown held on by the bridle. Charlie kept the upper ground, and squeezing the old horse, sent him at it, where the bank was highest. The place was wide, but sound, and he landed well on the other side. The white handkerchiefs went up in the carriages, and a little buzz of applause, but the interest was too deep for a shout. Just then he heard one, and hoped his competitor was in. Robinson Brown was just getting on his legs, the mare was already up again ; he had fallen the right side. He took a pull at *Œdipus*, and looked at the mare. She was pulling double, and seemed all the fresher for her fall. Brown looked positively cheerful, and Charlie never liked him better than at that moment. He really could ride, and had plenty of nerve. It was only even betting still. It was anybody's race now, and they were entering the ridge and furrow field before coming to the double post and rails ; Charlie well in advance, and *Œdipus* going up and down like a pony. Reluctance surely could not go over ridge and furrow like that. But she did ; and Robinson Brown raced to catch him. "Not a symptom of distress in either," said young Dacre, as he sat on his mare, to some ladies in a carriage beside him ; "but Charlie looks like winning. What a horseman he is !" The taking off was not good, and Charlie knew it ; so catching the horse tight by the head, and putting all his heart into it, he sent him at the most favourable place he could see. There's never a great deal of time to think when once in the air, and a faint shriek was the first intimation that he had smashed twenty feet of stiff timber, and was down. "Lucky I held him tight," thought our hero, as he jumped on to his feet, almost as quickly as *Œdipus*, and, shying the reins over his neck, threw himself into the

saddle. He had just time to see that the mare had done it all safely, and was well to the fore, when he set his horse going. His situation was precarious, and he knew it. Wherever Charlie went he carried his head with him, even if it were not worth much. Three-quarters of a mile from home, the fastest horse of the two in front, by about a hundred yards, and heaps of other people's money on the event. There were five more fences, and whoever was round the bank first must win. Round the bank? there is but one chance for it, and it must be done. Reluctance still went on with the lead, and though the horse never slackened his pace, the mare didn't come back, as Charlie intended she should have done. He began to shorten the distance by a trifle. Yes, by Jove! she's getting shorter in her stride, and here's the plough. It's a sticker at the end of three miles and a half; and Charlie looked for furrow full of water. Robinson Brown kept straight on. Flop, flop, flop, went the horse; but still he gained; and he entered the next field about sixty yards behind the mare. And there's the bank, right in front, which separates them from the winning field by a single fence. Crowds of people lined the ridge, even to the right of the pink flag they extended. What will the rider of Reluctance do? As he neared the obstacle he looked back, then he felt his mare, then he looked at the people. "It's all over," thought he; "he can't do the bank, and I won't risk it." He turned away to the left, and steered straight for the gap in the corner, that let him through to the opening in the proposed line of rails. As he reached the gap, Charlie steered straight for the hill; holding his horse firmly, and jogging him up the ascent, the people in suspense cleared a road, and shouted applause. Straight over the bank he went. Slide, slither, slide! but with his head perfectly straight for the winning chair, *Œdipus* came towards the bottom of the descent; and just as he looked like falling, within ten or twelve feet of the bottom, Charlie jumped him into the course. At the same moment Reluctance, in full stride, appeared beyond the edge of the bank within forty yards of the horse, and right abreast of him. "It's a race! it's a race!" shouted the people. And it was. But *Œdipus* was straight for the fence before him, and the mare came diagonally towards it. They both jumped it together, but the mare had shot her bolt; and as Charlie turned round to look at her he shook his horse gently for a couple of strides, and cantered in a winner by about six lengths. Time eleven minutes and a half, and Robinson

Brown quite pumped. "That's a d—d good animal, Jane, dear, and I'll give you five hundred for her," said the Hon. Smoker, from the judge's stand.

"You'd better wipe those scales," said Charlie; "they're all over dirt, and these colours of Tom's are quite new."

As he was riding slowly off the course, an open carriage ploughed its way solemnly through the grass; it was stopped near Charlie by the crowd, and the well-known voice of Lady Elizabeth Montague Mastodon, of whom we have lost sight for a time, was heard in congratulation.

"The first time we ever met, Mr. Thornhill, was after a steeple-chase, but I little expected we should ever meet at one. However, my friend Edith Dacre is too much of a sportsman to stay away; and as Mr. Mastodon is not enough of a sportsman to come, I have been doing penance. Let me congratulate you on your success. If it's worth doing at all, of which I'm very doubtful, it's worth doing well. I suppose you've made a fortune."

"You forget that I never bet," said Charlie, taking off his hat to Edith, and longing to get round to that side of the carriage, but wondering, at the same time, what everybody would think.

"Bless me! no. Your brother does that for both of you. We've not see him for an age."

Charlie apologised for Tom and himself. They had both been away, but he would ride over to-morrow or next day to take leave. He was going to leave England for some time. Charlie looked at Edith's face as he spoke, and he saw something which gave him hope.

When he got back to Sedgeley, Mrs. Bustleton had a note for him. Sam Downy had been summoned to the room of the wounded gipsy, at the moment he was about to start for the steeple-chase. He begged Mr. Charles to come over; there was something to divulge, and he would tell it to nobody but Mr. Charles Thornhill. He could not live; he was injured internally, and in his spine. The letter begged him to come quickly.

He went as fast as posterns and the train could take him to Dunham Heath. It was too late; the poor fellow was dead. Tom Thornhill followed in the morning. They went into the chamber of death, the two brothers. The woman drew aside the sheet from his face, and there, in the Gipsy George, and

the Whitechapel Dog-stealer, lay the mysterious visitant to Gilsland.

"And he was there?" said Tom.

"Assuredly."

"But he came to warn me, and refused to take my money. I didn't believe his story."

"You see it was true, sir; but lor! we'd made it all right before he turned king's evidence."

And then they heard from Mrs. Downy, and the nurse, and the police, of a mixture of names, which seemed to startle, as a roar of very distant thunder: a storm that had passed away—Kildonald, and Burke, and Squire Thornhill, and the meeting on Bidborough Heath—a terrible night, and never mentioned amongst them; buried forsooth, in profound mystery; and now, for the last time, as it seemed, in the grave. How soft, placid, and beautiful the face of the gipsy was, as he lay in his long last sleep! His matted hair clustering round his white forehead, and his long eyelashes lying on the cheeks from which all colour had at last fled. How little symbol of his noisy and criminal existence remained behind! Have we buried all his evil with him, or no?

Charles Thornhill rose from a seat in the drawing-room of Fossils Thorpe Park, a few days later.

"Good morning, Lady Elizabeth. I must say good-bye," said Charlie, looking round the room, however, as if he missed something which ought to be there. It was getting dusk, and he had a sharp ride to Thornhills before him, as he justly remarked.

"Miss Dacre will be sorry to have missed you; though, as she returns home next week, you may see her at Gilsland before you leave England." Here her ladyship held out her hand cordially, for Charlie was a favourite, and said, "You must ring for yourself, or walk round to the stables; I get so very lame, Mr. Thornhill."

Charlie preferred the latter, and retired. In crossing the hall, Edith Dacre met him; she had just returned from a walk in the park. I know nothing so becoming to a girl's face as the roses gathered from the fresh air of a fine winter's day. Summer roses carry the seeds of their own failure in the heat that produces them; but hibernal bloom tells of health, vigour, animation, life. So thought Charlie at the moment Edith recognised him; and he stopped, absolutely perplexed by her

beauty. It was nothing new to him to be perplexed, it is true. Still he floundered and faltered, till she fairly turned round, and walked towards the hall door. It opened on to a terrace which, at any other time than a raw winter's afternoon, might have invited a walk. Her bonnet was still on, and very becoming.

"My dear," said Mr. Mastodon, half an hour later, "who is the gentleman whose horse was just now being led out of the visitors' stable?"

"Just now? If you mean an hour ago, it was Charles Thornhill."

"Of course it was; the white-legged chestnut: but he is only this moment gone."

"Then he'll have a very cold ride of fourteen miles, and scarcely be in time for dinner. I suppose he's been admiring something."

"But it's pitch dark."

"Perhaps he admires somebody. Did you see Miss Dacre, my dear?"

"No, Lady Elizabeth. That's an imprudent idea. He hasn't a shilling."

"He may not be the worse for that. I don't like monied men—at least they're not all like you. Besides he may make a fortune; one of his ancestors did." Her ladyship was partly in his confidence. After all, he was not such a dunce as they tried to make him out. To be sure Tom was the genius, and that always makes a difference.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TWO GIRLS, AND THE TWO WOMEN.

"Now leave to talk of love,
And humbly on your knee
Direct your prayers unto God,
But mourn no more for me."—*Ballad.*

IN one of the wings of Gilsland were three rooms *en suite*. They belonged to the Misses Dacre. There was a common sitting-room, shared by both, and a bed-room opening from it,

on either side. It was at their option to share the same, or to retire to separate rooms.

They had dismissed their maid, and sat in demi-toilette before a fire which lighted up the warm-looking carpet and winter curtains. Edith had that day returned from Fossils Thorpe Park, and was resting her head on her sister's shoulder. There was no lamp, but a small flat candlestick was, so to speak, thrown into shade by the fitful, but fine glare of the Derbyshire coal fire. There were tears gathering fast on her lids, and her cheek was flushed—at least as much as could be seen from the luxuriant folds of her rich brown hair.

“Oh, Alice dear, what a weight of happiness in all this uncertainty!” said she, as she let a tear fall upon her sister's hand.

Alice kissed her kindly, and then said, “But why make a weight of it, darling? You must love him dearly. Who could help it?”

“But papa and mamma. Dear mamma ; what a disappointment !”

“Come, courage ! Edith. I know papa better than you. Act as you ought to act. Have no secret from them. All will go well.”

“Ah ! if I had but your courage, dear Alice. But you have no secret such as I ; you have no trouble, dear. So it's easy enough for you to advise.” And here Edith was getting a little out of temper, and becoming by consequence unjust.

“And how do you now that I have no secret and no trouble, Edith ?” said her sister, colouring to the temples, but making a bold effort to look her sister in the face. It was unnecessary ; for Edith only buried her face deeper in her sister's bosom, and sobbed the louder. “I have a secret and a trouble such as you.” Edith raised her head, and her tears ceased to flow : surprise had dried them. Alice did not need to bury her head, whilst she made the confession of her love. “I fear no confession to my dear father, nor to my mother, darling ; but I fear to make it to myself. I have not told them what he said to me, nor what I said to him, for I have not accepted him ; and it is his secret as much as mine. But I tell you ; and you must be cheerful and happy yourself, and help me to be so. Mine is a worse burden than yours, dear ; yours will be light enough in time, but mine will grow heavier every day.” And here the stronger leant upon the weaker, and took comfort from their mutual

helplessness. They did not think with the prince of classic dramatists that—

“Τό τοι διπλάσιον ὁ γύναι, μείσον κακόν.”—*Ajax. Soph.*

“Then you don’t love him, Alice, as I love Charlie?”

“Why not?”

“Because you don’t trust him.”

“Does a mother love her child less because she will not trust him when wandering on the brink of a precipice?”

“Then reclaim him, as the mother reclaims her infant.”

“You shall have no secret to-morrow, dearest. We’ll both confess together. To-night, God bless and direct us both.” But they did not separate that night.

The scene changes to Thornhills, and it is after tea.

“Nonsense, Emily! why in the world should you be in such a hurry to marry him? You always talk of it as an universal panacea.”

“It would be in his case. And how are you to know anything about it?”

“I think I know quite as well what’s good for him as his mother, at all events,” rejoined Aunt Mary. “You’ve always spoilt him: and now you want to punish him for your self-indulgence.” Aunt Mary was given to warmth of temper as well as heart, and made considerable grimaces, according to her custom, at such times.

“Spoilt him, indeed, Mary Stanhope. That’s rather good of you, who never allow him to be contradicted.”

“Well! he is coming here to-morrow; and from all I hear, he’s not very well disposed to take his medicine.” Here she groaned and yawned, and put her hand to her side. She was always an invalid on these occasions.

“He’d be much oftener here, if we asked some one to meet him.”

“He would if you filled your house with sharpers, and gamesters, and——”

“I shall write and ask the Dacres to-morrow: he was at Oxford with Edward Dacre, and I dare say he’ll enjoy the pheasant shooting. As Charlie won’t be here, they’ll want another gun.”

“Charlie’s worth a dozen of him, and much fitter to be married than he.”

"I hope it will be to Miss Robinson Brown, unless you intend to support them." And here Mrs. Thornhill shook out the voluminous folds of her dress, and prepared for further combat. But Aunt Mary would not go on. She gaped, and looked at her cousin with considerable temper. Her sallow complexion and dark eyes were lighted up with a spark of uncommon fire; and, ringing the bell unceremoniously, she retired for the night without a salute.

"How stupid Mary Sranhope is! She thinks she knows everything, and is always giving her opinion about Tom's extravagance. I'm sure, if he only got a good wife, he'd be the best husband alive. I shall certainly ask those Dacre girls for the shooting week." Here the soliloquy ended; and, ringing the bell, she followed the example of her cousin Mary, and went to bed. She thought, too, that a mother's prayer would not hurt him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RETROSPECTIVE.

"Et sa présence, ainsi qu'à vous,
M'est un cruel supplice."—MOLIERE, *Mal. Imag.*

THE pleasure of writing a novel has its drawbacks. The necessity for going back, as the only means of getting forward, is exceedingly troublesome. But it must be done. We seem almost to have taken leave of some of those with whom we opened our story; and we never knew the value of our friends, nor our creations, till they seem to have left us for ever. This is just the case now. We would willingly leave everyone to tell his own story in his own way, more by ethical than by historical development: but before we can do so, we must retrace our steps. Just to make the place tidy we will sweep up the crumbs.

After the strict investigation, and hopeless mystery, which succeeded the assassination of Geoffrey Thornhill, Kildonald had disappeared from the scene. Circumstances had placed him in so questionable a light, that many persons were not without their suspicions that he was directly or indirectly concerned in that

affair. Those, however, who were best informed, entirely exonerated him. The whole circumstances, the intended duel, his return to Henry Corry's house, and information of the murder, the improbability of the thing altogether, and his uniform explanation, served to acquit him in their eyes. His absence from England immediately after the final dismissal of the case could be easily accounted for. He could show his face no more amongst his former companions. The Clubs, St. James's, Newmarket, and Melton, were henceforth closed to Kildonald, as thoroughly as if he had been the archfiend; and there were none behind as bad as himself. He had committed the unpardonable offence of being found out. The Jockey Club pronounced on the case with a zeal and honesty of expression quite edifying, and made such a raid amongst the suspected of the betting fraternity, that no one was found out again until very nearly the end of the season. However, Kildonald got his ill-earned money from Burke, and retired to that paradise of sharpers the Continent.

Kildonald was a man of quick impulses: some generous ones; and not all bad. His errors had been those of education; strong temptation: and an incapability to resist. The loss of his property, and the ties he had contracted—his false position in the world, and the evil influence of a man like Burke, who, as we have seen, held him by some secret power—were the rocks on which he split. He had never felt his position before this time: he had done much that was dishonourable, but it had never recoiled upon him, as his present disgrace. If we were all found out, I wonder whether we should most despise or pity one another!

Geoffrey Thornhill's death affected him very seriously. It made him think; and the Tyrol, not then so *recherché* as it has since become, is a great place for solemn reflection. Kildonald was not hardened, depraved; but he was not one of those erring, but fine minds, which can make reparation at its own expense, or take vengeance upon itself. So he carried with him the money, the price of his dishonesty, and lived quietly, cheaply, and unknown, not far from Saltzburg. He thought highly of his self-immolation, and the mausoleum in which he had buried himself alive. There are many like him. His reasons for this seclusion were manifold, and did credit to his head and heart. It was not expensive: it was out of the world; was not unlike the wilder parts of Ireland, on a larger scale; afforded good, but

inexpensive education for his children ; and was not so unpleasant to his wife, as a life of exile might have been.

When he left England, his wife, Norah Kildonald, whom he loved very sincerely, had decided upon going with him. During his hours of prosperity she had borne his absences without complaint, under the impression that he was happy. In a season of adversity, when the world frowned, she insisted on her right of comforting him : what woman does not ?

She came : and the household of Mr. and Mrs. Kildonald was small, but gracefully administered—after the fashion of woman. She brought her son and her stepdaughter. She had never inquired further than the fact, which she had learnt piecemeal, that her husband had made an early and imprudent marriage. Kathleen was the sister of Gipsy George.

For a length of time they grew old together. But by degrees Kildonald pined for the world, not exactly of London nor of Paris ; but for an approach to its suburbs. He had forgotten his peccadilloes, as easily as the world had forgotten him. Besides, to be boxed up in a Tyrolese village, for Norah and Kathleen never to see a soul, and the boy, who wanted to see something of society before he went into the Prussian service ! His father preferred it to Austria. Norah sighed : she knew the meaning of “seeing a soul.” Kathleen was glad of any change that promised to break the monotony of a very dull life : Kildonald himself felt like a returned convict, or ticket-of-leave man—on his best behaviour, but with an unmitigated taste for house-breaking with violence.

“What’s the matter, Arthur ? you look tired,” said his wife, kindly.

“Tired ? I’m ill, Norah. This place doesn’t agree with me. I can’t stay here any longer. I should like to get back into Germany.”

After some discussion, Frankfort was fixed upon. Here, in an obscure street, not far from the Jews’ quarter, they rented a small flat. Kildonald was pleased for a time : then a run to Wiesbaden or Homburg was easy, and on one or two occasions he came back smilingly—occasionally a reverse happened. His means of subsistence to you and me was a mystery. Norah believed in the old Kildonald estate. The facts are simple.

Some money he had. It did not last for ever. Two years after his expatriation he heard of the losses on the Kildonald property, by reason of the non-completion of the sale by the

Thornhills. He certainly had had no money, nor was he receiving the rents of the estate. He applied in Cork, by means of friends, for a statement, a settlement, a something. He could get neither of the two first, and there were reasons why he could not employ law. But he got the something. He got money, when he wanted it, doled out at intervals, by Burke. It seemed that Burke was receiving the rents, and claimed the estate, by a mortgage upon it for the greater part of its value. He was unwilling to foreclose ; and he was not a man to be forced into explanations, at any rate by Kildonald. To say truth Kildonald cared but little for anything, if he could gratify his passion for play, which had only lain dormant for want of opportunity. Each year since their absence from their cottage in the Tyrol had seen them on a downward course. Norah tried hard to stem the tide ; but the devil was too strong for her, and ruin was running its course. Norah was a woman ; and as her husband sunk in her esteem, he seemed to have risen in her love. What could she do ? She began to teach in Frankfort. An English governess, resident in the town : so charming a manner ; so sweet a face ; always a smile to cover that aching heart, could not fail to make friends. But teaching is not highly paid anywhere, least of all in Germany : a few florins monthly, to help her boy, who was at Düsseldorf, or Kathleen, who was not old enough to help herself, found their way to the gaming table. But Kildonald was not himself—there was always some evil influence behind him : silent, unknown, but secretly felt. Norah felt it, knew it : Arthur was so changed : it was Ireland over again, with the weight of years added to its pains. And so we have brought them down to this present time : and the evil influence is again upon the stage.

There had been great doings at Mainlust. It was a fine evening in autumn, and the gardens had been full to a late hour. There had been music and *weissen wein*, and *rothen wein*, and smoking and flirting. It was very late, and all good and quiet citizens of the free city had left long ago. There lingered some ladies of the old town, some noisy Fuchs from Heidelberg, and two or three officers, finishing their last bottle. They were not all. At a corner of the gardens, not now so well lighted by the coloured paper lamps as half an hour previously, sat two mysterious-looking persons, smoking, not drinking, and conversing in low tones. They were not Germans, still less Frenchmen ; and the contrast between themselves was even greater

than that between them and their late comrades. The one was stout, short, vulgar ; without beard, but portentously whiskered ; and singularly over-dressed. The other was tall, thin, pale, and iron-gray. Singularly aristocratic-looking, prematurely old : he wore a drooping moustache and large beard. He was remarkably quiet in his dress, and but for a certain nervousness would have been equally so in his manner. It would have been difficult to have recognised in him the former *Gandin* of London, and the finest horseman of his day. They rose at the same moment. The one saying, with a vulgarity of Irish accent somewhat rare in society, "I wouldn't have known ye anywhere, Kildonald. Sure, ye're changed, man !"

"And you, not at all, I should have known you, Mr. Burke, if I'd met you in the streets of Pekin or—or—Cork."

Burke winced under the allusion to his native city, and was silent for a minute—"how much did he know, or how little?" thought he,

"Shall we be going?" at length said he.

"With pleasure," rejoined Kildonald.

They took their way from the gardens, as the last waiter extinguished the last lamps and carried away the last empty bottle, along the quay. It was a warm night, and they walked slowly, distrustfully, without the cheerfulness of friends, or the energy of open enemies. They were useful to each other, mutually suspicious, and mutually fearful.

"Which is your way to-night?" asked Kildonald, assuming an air of coolness, and turning a cigar in his mouth.

"To the Mayence railway."

"You have come the wrong road—it lies the other way."

"I have an hour to wait for my train, and will accompany you home."

"Impossible ! my lodgings are not—not exactly——"

"If there's a chair to sit down upon, I'm content ; faith, I know what roughing it is, since we knew one another before."

"But it's—there are reasons——"

"Pooh ! pooh ! what, an old friend, Kildonald ? Come, bedad, we must talk the matter over : between us, sure there's no ceremony."

Kildonald stopped at a turning which led on the left towards the Römerberg and the cathedral : he hesitated a moment, and seemed suddenly to make up his mind ; then said deliberately,

"You forget that Mrs. Kildonald is with me, and my daughter—let us turn towards the station."

"And pray, sir, have you forgotten to whom you're indebted for that same lady, whom you call Mrs. Kildonald?" Kildonald turned pale; he felt it, and his companion must have felt it too; for he as suddenly added, "but there, man, let us talk of something else. What about the young Englishman? when will you come to the 'Mount?'"

"I cannot assist you further than I have done," said Kildonald.

"Then thank you for nothing; you've found our fox, which any one might have done; but I can't kill him alone," rejoined the other.

"Without hounds, I suppose you mean to say," and the tone in which Kildonald spoke had a bitter irony in it.

"Perhaps I do: but at least we hunt in couples—I share the risk——"

"And take the whole of the profits. You must find another dog to bear you company in this matter, for I cannot."

"Say—will not. But, come, Kildonald, you throw fortune away from you at the very moment she is at your feet. Listen: there's enough for us both to be got out of this wealthy Englishman, this Carlingford. He plays high, and eagerly. He wants no persuasion, has no skill, not even common prudence. Sure you or I may profit by our knowledge: we've bought it."

"And I have paid for it, Mr. Burke: it costs you nothing. Have you one soul to drag down to infamy besides your own? have you a wife, a son, a daughter?—yes, I repeat it, a daughter; for she's as dear to me as the rest—who might live to curse the infamy of a father who sold them all to misery and vice, because—because——"

"Because he wouldn't see them starve. Where's the infamy? We play as thousands more. We are successful. Why not? Are we accountable for the losses of a young fool who thrusts himself into the way of danger? Come, you take this too seriously. What is it? The whole of these rascally pettifogging foreigners live to play. What they call play—some half-dozen florins a day. The young earl does not care for the tables: they're not quiet enough, nor high enough for him. He likes hazard. Lord Carlingford can bleed enough in one night to—what shall I say?—to enable you to—ay!—to pay me the whole of the debt on the Kildonald property. With good nursing it

can be made to pay twice its present income; and you may return to Ireland, be yourself again, and leave it to your boy——”

“Saddled with his father’s dishonour,” and the sigh was one of decreased resistance.

“If it was so, bedad, I think he wouldn’t refuse the offer,” said Burke, who saw that he had made an impression, and became less guarded in his brutality.

“What!” said the other hoarsely, “with the education of a gentleman and a soldier——”

“Which are you speaking of?”

“Ah! stop, Burke; true, true. You remind me, cruelly, very cruelly. But——another time; not now, sir——how hot and suffocating the air is.” And here Kildonald took off his hat, and wiped his brow. He stood still, looking on the waters of the Maine, as it ran rapidly towards the Rhine. In that moment a thousand contending thoughts flitted through his brain. He tried hard to collect them—to arrange them. He thought he ought to resent something, and yet there was a cogent reason for not offending. He tried to be dignified, but a strong sense of degradation, a weight of previous necessity, kept him down. At last he said, “I’m not well this evening; to-morrow, or the next day, we may meet again: but pray leave me now.”

“Then dine with me to-morrow. No. The day after, then. Come; and bring Mrs. Kildonald and your daughter. It will do them good to run over to the Mount.” (The Mount was the name given to a cottage in which he lived half a mile from Wiesbaden.) “I’ll ask Lord Carlingford.”

“Yes; the day after. There; good night.” And, as if fearful of further parley, he turned round, disappeared up one of the narrow streets leading from the river.

Burke turned away, and returned by the river-side. “I have him safe enough,” thought he. “With Kildonald’s assistance we shall manage Milord admirably. He’s not half out-at-elbows yet. Lords never know when they are ruined. There’s but few of ’em been through my hands.”

The street up which Kildonald turned was one of those very old, picturesque parts of Frankfort which have been enlivened by Prout and Roberts, but which, without the bits of bright green, blue, or scarlet, never seen in the original, are brown and dingy-looking enough. The houses overlap one another, and the upper stories overhang the lower, so as to render it, very artist-like,

but dangerous and dirty in the extreme. The confusion of his mind, the conflicting hopes and fears, his anger, and the necessity for restraining it, battling in a not-over-strong frame, had a very painful effect upon him. He had not recovered himself, and though perfectly conscious of it, he could not prevent himself from reeling. Once he stopped short, as if about to fall ; but he recovered himself again, and proceeded towards his own house. It was in a mean back street, not far from the cathedral—between that and the river. At that moment he felt a hand on his arm, and a good-natured voice said, “Excuse me ; I followed you from the quay, and seeing you were a countryman, and evidently unwell, I thought I might offer you an arm. Lean on me.”

The assistance was very timely, and too kindly offered to be refused. Kildonald took the stranger’s arm ; and after a silent walk of a few minutes, he halted at the corner of the street in which he lived. He thanked the stranger gratefully for his assistance.

“And are you certain you require no more ?”

“No, thank you, I feel better. A sudden faintness overcame me. Besides, I’m at home. Adieu ; and many thanks for your kindness.”

“I wonder how much of our conversation he heard ?” thought the last speaker.

“Well, that was a dismissal, at all events,” thought the good Samaritan. “Now who, in the name of fortune, is he ? and who was the man I met by the water-side. They were after no particular good, by the little I heard. This fellow looks like a gentleman. Confound these streets, how dark they keep them ! A Jew’s eye ought to have been a bright one.” However, he was soon in the “Zeil,” and let himself into a handsome house with a latch-key.

The next day Kildonald was ill of paralysis ; and it was many weeks before he left his room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

EXPLANATORY.

“Ich führe das nur an, Euch auf die Spur
Zu bringen. Stetzt euch selber nun zusammen.”
SCHILLER, *Macb.*

DURING this time Burke was not idle. His career had been chequered since last we met him. Sudden suspicions of his honest dealings had been followed by heavy losses, the estrangement of friends, and the attacks of enemies. He was observed to be uneasy and absent ; his once flourishing business became less respectable and less lucrative. Some transactions connected with the turf, and some heavy speculations in the money market, helped him on his downward course. His vulgarity no longer stood for honesty, his brusquerie for talent. He quitted Ireland for ever, comparatively a ruined man—if so great a scoundrel could be ruined in a world where there are so many fools. He had not been very unsuccessful, however, at the various gambling tables to which he resorted : he only felt his inferiority in private play, where his grossness of manner and vulgarity of appearance were against him. When he accidentally met with Kildonald a few months previous to their last conversation, he was not too blind to see that he would be a most valuable ally.

Lately he had begun to suspect that his hold upon Kildonald was looser than it had been. But Kildonald was one of those men who could not face want ; and Burke, however unjustly, held the purse-strings in his grasp. Impaired as his own fortunes were, he contrived to live well and ostentatiously, wherever he was. Strange to say, whether with ulterior views, or from fear of detection should his victim be driven too hard, he also contrived to supply Kildonald with a pittance at intervals, and with some regularity. This was always supposed to be a portion of the Kildonald rent-roll, the rest finding its way into Mr. Burke's pocket in the form of certain heavy charges upon the property for moneys advanced and never paid, and for which Mr. Burke still held the acknowledgments. These were presumed to be in the handwriting of the late Kildonald.

Another force besides the fear of want, however, had up to the present kept the sufferer quiet, and induced him at least to offer no strong opposition to the schemes of rascality of his

countryman. Now Burke was positively generous. He came frequently to Frankfort—always, apparently with inquiries for his old acquaintance. He did not always come empty-handed. He appeared to force on the sick man's wife a more liberal allowance. He talked boldly and blusteringly of the pleasures of doing good, as the roar of the wild beast before an attack. The wife and the mother's heart was gained. Hubert Kildonald was home from Düsseldorf, and Burke was loud in his praises of his fine figure and his noble appearance. Perhaps his admiration was sincere: for the boy was all he said, and more too. The mother's culture had not been thrown away.

There was another, too, whom he had seen once or twice, but whom his bold, bad gaze had sent blushing from the room. This was Kathleen. She was just bursting into womanhood, and, though not the daughter of Norah, she had so much acquired her look, her manner, her softness, and simplicity, that the face was imperceptibly being impressed with a great likeness. But she was brighter, gayer, and less regular in feature than Norah: she had wit, intelligence, and great apprehension; she had a well-cultivated mind, as far as her seclusion would allow it to be so. Her eyes were large and lustrous; her hair abundant and glistening, of a dark brown; her nose only piquantly *retroussée*; her mouth full and dimpling, not very small, but very characteristic of her country; her figure was perfection—not tall and stately, nor drooping, as the manner of some is, but light, active, and round, of middle height; her very step denoted vigour of purpose, the companion of high health and physical development. She had a charming smile, and was an impersonation of dimples and blushes. Such was Kathleen Kildonald at eighteen years of age.

The winter was gone: Kildonald's health was better, but he had grown prematurely old. He had scarcely quitted the house in the cold weather, but an early spring and the pleasant sunshine, of a brighter day than usual strengthened him. He began to move like himself again. He walked more uprightly, and he was beginning to be as careful of his dress as heretofore. Norah had nursed him well; and, in her own views of economy, managed to afford him many comforts and some luxuries. Burke seemed to have left the neighbourhood for a time. Letters from England had arrived during his illness which had interested both him and Norah; and though they contained some intelligence that could scarcely be called cheerful, it relieved him of a

great anxiety. He learnt the death of his unhappy son George, who had, at least, never borne his name, whatever his title to it; and the wreck of a vessel in which George's mother had sailed for Australia, and in which all on board perished, left him free from a clog which had long galled him.

When Kildonald was a young man under age, he had fallen in love with a beautiful girl much below him in rank, and of no very good character, called Mary Connor. A secret marriage, through fear of his father, had been arranged between them, and George and Kathleen had been the results of this connection. Whether by his own neglect, or the woman's depravity, she had proved false to him. She left him with her son, then a boy of four or five years of age, and sunk by slow degrees into nothing more nor less than a common tramp. The girl had been preserved from a similar fate by accident. She had been educated by his friends as a child; and when he was married again to his present wife she was taken to his home, and had the same affectionate care bestowed upon her as his son, the only fruit of his second marriage. By the management of Burke, his first wife, still alive, had been bought off by the payment of periodical instalments; and caring nothing for Kildonald, and fearing the loss of her means of enjoyment, moderate as they were, she had felt it to be her interest to keep scrupulously to her promise of secrecy. It was this power which gave Burke his influence over Kildonald. The fear of exposure, whilst in the world, had made him a willing instrument in the hands of the lawyer; and though time and distance, and his absence from society so long, had weakened the bond, still the pain that the knowledge would have inflicted on Norah, whom he sincerely loved, as far as his selfish nature was capable of loving, made him anxiously fearful of an exposure. The death of mother and son so far lessened the chance of detection that he felt almost at ease on this score. The only remaining evidence was that of Burke himself; and although he would not have provoked it heedlessly, he felt himself at liberty to assume an independence of his tyranny. The question of the money and estate he now thought might be submitted to the lawyers with some hope of successful issue.

The summer passed slowly on. The pittance forwarded from time to time served to keep them from want, and to purchase some luxuries needed for a convalescent. Norah was, as ever, patient, unflagging in kindness, and self-sacrificing to the whims and caprices of the sick man. He recovered slowly. His native

air was recommended. He answered, drily enough, that he "didn't think his native air would agree" with him. Kathleen was increasing in beauty daily : all that could be spared for the purpose was being spent on her education ; and, amongst other advantages, good instruction is cheap enough in the Hanse Towns. It had been almost decided that she should seek employment in the City by way of meeting the increasing expenses.

Illness had much altered Kildonald. He began to think again ; and a weakness, physical as well as mental, had had a salutary effect on the *morale*. Many circumstances assisted to produce this effect ; for the wind is not the less there, even though the mill may stand still. It is not sufficient that abuses should only be destroyed : the moral tone must be modified.

Autumn had arrived, and with it might be expected the usual locust herd at the German baths. It affected Frankfort much. The English, Russian, Viennese, Parisian (I mention the two latter municipally, for I do not mean Austrians nor French), all who had lost money, and would retrench, and many who had a few thousand francs to spare, took the place *en route*. The Hotel de Russie was always crowded : and the celebrated Johannisberger, at seven thalers the bottle, seemed to be almost a widow's cruse. It was always going. In due time Burke re-appeared.

He was not long in seeking the humble street in which Kildonald lived. He had the same game in view as last autumn, and his previous disappointment only sharpened his appetite. He would, and might perhaps, have found another and more tractable accomplice ; but he could have found few so *habile*, so fitted for his purpose, and none to whom he could apply without exposing much that he would rather confine to as few as possible. It was an object, therefore, to make a favourable impression : and he had paved his way by some pecuniary advances more liberal than usual.

"You have been seriously ill : you don't recover as you should," said he, after a few ordinary expressions. "You must take rooms at Homburg, or Wiesbaden, Mrs. Kildonald. Have you no influence ? It's not fair of you for Kildonald to insist on looking so old." Burke was self-satisfied.

"But we're not so young as we were, Mr. Burke," replied she, with a rather woe-begone smile, "and he's not so easily persuaded to move as he was." Mrs. Kildonald would have moved into a worse place than purgatory to have relieved him ; and she regarded both the places mentioned in that light.

"The baths are fuller than ever; but you'll, maybe, get rooms a little way from the town, which will be better for your husband. He'll get some fresh air and a little society." Here Burke appealed to Kildonald himself, who sat nervously turning in his arm-chair. Now and then a spasm seemed to pass across his face, and a peevish "pish!" was the only answer he gave to each new suggestion.

The room in which they sat looked uncomfortable for an invalid. A strip of carpet did duty for a whole one: the polished boards underneath were very clean, and very cold. The stove was not yet in the room. The piano occupied one side, or rather end; and the size of it, and the old-fashioned, but handsome cornices, gave it an air of cheerless grandeur. Kildonald sat at a table, on which were many letters and papers. Of books there were none but a few of the Tauchnitz edition of English novels, and some German and French school-books, which belonged to his daughter. After a little time Mrs. Kildonald left the room.

"Letters from the ould country?" asked Burke.

"They are," replied Kildonald, with a cold and distant manner.

"They bring no good news, I'll go bail. There's nothing but ill luck there; and as to that estate, faith, I'm entirely out of pocket by it this two years." Burke spoke deprecatingly.

"It's a misfortune that my family has been accustomed to longer than that. It would be satisfactory to know what does become of the rent. The tenants must be in clover." And here the speaker turned round and looked Burke in the face.

"I own I—don't quite—understand, Kildonald."

"Probably not, Mr. Burke; but it's hard to find comprehension——"

"Oh! here's Mrs. Kildonald just in time," said Burke, as the door opened, and she and Kathleen entered. The latter, however, seeing her father engaged, stepped back, and Mrs. Kildonald crossed the room, and went out by an opposite door. They were again alone; but the interruption enabled Burke to evade the former discussion, and he continued: "But come, you want something to do. Your health will be the better for the change. I want money, Kildonald; and if I want it, you will want it."

"Then I must continue to want it if you depend upon my assistance; but, at least, you are in receipt of my property."

"At present I'm in receipt of nothing. I've lost my last

florin; but I've borrowed a hundred. Share it with me. Come to Wiesbaden. I've a goose there that lays golden eggs." And Burke chuckled.

"And I'm to be the decoy-duck. You assign me an honourable post."

"Decoy-duck? Nonsense! Come, come, be reasonable. You were not so particular once. We've rowed in the same boat too long to upset it now. It won't be many years before we shall be doing a little racing here: the foreigners are very keen about it. It will be well to keep your hand in whenever you get a chance."

During this speech Kildonald had slowly risen: he appeared to find a difficulty, and sat down again, whilst a bright flush lighted up his pale cheeks, and his still handsome eyes nearly flashed fire. As Burke, however, terminated with the allusion to his hand, he rose suddenly, and resting his left hand upon the table, he drew the right suddenly from his bosom. "Hand, did you say, hand!" and he held up, to the astonished sight of his visitor, a withered and useless limb. "There, sir! is that a hand to deal a card, or a blow to *sauter le coup*, or pull a horse? Is that, sir—answer me—a hand to help you in your tricks of *leger-de-main*, and to transfer gold from one pocket to another? Would to God it had withered before it ever lent its aid to your schemes of villany and fraud—the hand that has made me an exile and a byword! Ay, look at it! ye may well stare! Would to God it had been employed in digging the acres it has striven to secure, but which have slipped from its grasp, as if it had always been thus weak and powerless! Look at it! and if prayers could restore it, its first act should be to avenge itself upon the cowardly miscreant who fattens upon the blood of his victims! I know you, sir; and I'll unmask you." Whilst he was yet speaking, Norah had opened the door, but he had not heeded her. She stood still, and he continued: "I fear you not, now. Do your worst. Your secret is worthless. Where are your proofs, sir—your proofs—and your word—the word of a robber: who believes it?"

"Oh! Mr. Burke, Mr. Burke; heed him not: it is his health—his irritation. He does not know what he is saying." And Norah stepped between them as Burke's face assumed the passions of a demon about to spring upon his prey. "Leave him, sir, to me—to his wife—I beg," as the other stood motionless with passion and surprise.

As Burke turned to leave the room, Kildonald threw himself into the arms of Norah, sobbing—"Yes, my wife, my wife!" and sank fainting upon the floor.

Burke was already gone; and as he walked slowly down the wide, but dark staircase towards the street, he clenched his hand and muttered, "He shall pay dearly for this! but, first of all, how much does he know?"

CHAPTER XL.

"MAN OVERBOARD!"

"Omne animi vitium tanto confectius in se
Crimen habet, quanto major qui peccat, habetur."—
Juv. VIII, 140.

As Burke closed the door of the house in a narrow street between the cathedral and the Schnur Gasse, Charles Thornhill threw open the folding-door of a large banking-house in the Zeil, and took his way to the left in that confident manner which proclaimed him perfectly at home in the city of Frankfort. Englishman as he was, and looked (for he reserved to himself the sacred privilege of a clean chin), he was neither looking for the Hotel de Russie nor examining his "Murray," or foreign "Bradshaw." He was not in search of the Juden Gasse, nor even of the Ariadne, and no *valet de place* addressed him with the hope of employment. He walked sturdily and steadily forward with a rather business-like air, and attracted no notice from anyone, excepting that universal admiration which is given to size when accompanied by grace and good looks. It is almost two years since we had anything to do with Charlie. He has employed them well; and with the exception of a short visit to England on business in June last, which he made one of pleasure also, he had stuck to his work with a perseverance which confirmed the judgment of his friend, Palmer. He was about to cross the street to his "mid-day" dinner at the house of his chief, M. Meyerheim.

"Dornhills, by Jove! my goot fellow, how are you?" The inquiry proceeded from our old acquaintance, the Baron Hartzstein. Having had a very successful season in England, he was in a central position for a little foreign gambling.

"Well, baron," said Charlie, who was always amused with his friend, though by no means holding him in great respect: "tired of England?"

"England for me is London, and London is gone away."

"That is to say, come abroad: and who's here? Who has lost his money, or his wife, or his digestion? You can get them all back somewhere in the Black Forest, or on the Berg Strasse."

"Yees! you have right. And you—you go to Baden, or Homburg!" the baron not conceiving that any of his acquaintance could be at Frankfort for any other purpose.

"Neither: you know I'm a banker now—in Meyerheim's house: delighted to hold your winnings for you, baron: safer with us than you."

"Ah! I see: you will hold the money what your brother spends. But why not go to drink the waters? Waters is very goot."

"Wine's better; besides, what would our clients say?"

"Say! nothing—no! My friend, Baron Goldstock, the great banker of Vienna—bless my soul, Dornhills!—he's always breaking the bank; and then he breaks my sleep. I live in his hotel, and am not so lucky: so I go to bed, and at two in the morning he wakes us all up to tell us the news; and the next day all the world send their moneys to Goldstock and Co., of Vienna."

"I think I should close my account. Have you been long in Frankfort?"

"Last night only. I have been in Wiesbaden. There is an Englishman there, a man with a scarlet face and whiskers, who plays very high—and he wins: one Burke."

"Burke, Burke," said Charlie, soliloquising: "where have I heard that name?" and Charlie rubbed his nose, and smoothed his chin, a system of mnemonics cheap, if not efficient.

"Yes, Burke! He is a friend of one Donald; but Donald I never see: he was to come to dinner, many times, but Providence befriended him. You know I am strong. But I have seen you yesterday."

"Really! and where?"

"At the Thier-Garten: and, come, Dornhills, who was your pretty friend?"

"Some German lady, probably; but I forget at this moment."

"No, no! not of my Landsleute: it gives no such pretty women out of England. You cannot dress, and you have no

manner. You are not *rusé*, nor *spirituel*, nor *bien ganté*: you sing not, and you dance almost on what you call all-fours; but—ah! Gott bewhar—you have lovely women, and long-legged horses. I could add some of both to my collection: but come, you will not tell me?”

“Yes, I will, baron,” said Charlie, who had no great fear of the Austrian’s powers of fascination. “That was the governess of the two little girls, and the other was Madame Meyerheim; but I think she sat down whilst we walked about.”

“Oh! the governess!” and here the baron meant to be intelligible. “What! of my good friend Meyerheim? I must bank with Meyerheim and Co. I shall keep a large balance. Madame shall ask me to her evenings. Come, Dornhills, you shall introduce me at once.”

“But I am not going back to the bank at present. I am going home to dinner. I am become quite a German.”

“So much the better: you shall present me at once to madame.”

“No! baron—that’s out of the question. She doesn’t receive.”

“Then take care of yourself. You are jealous. You know I am sceptic about women. They are all bad, that is, good, when there is a ‘rapport.’ You believe in magnetism; mesmerism. No.”

“I believe in honour among men, and chastity among women. And if your intentions are as serious as you would have me think, don’t forget that this is an Englishwoman. Adieu,” and Charlie crossed the street.

The baron continued his walk: and the beautiful English girl, whom he had seen with Thornhill, became a settled idea. It took its place with dice and the Derby winner. Nothing of this sort presented difficulties to Baron Hartzstein.

“Mr. Thornhill,” said Madame Meyerheim, in German, “we almost gave you up: we are sorry to have begun, but Miss Donald and the children are going out after dinner, and we were anxious not to be late. The band plays at Mainlust to-day.” Charlie apologised good-humouredly, and took his seat opposite Miss Donald, by the side of little Bertha; Mr. Meyerheim was at the other end of the table.

“Where’s Heinrich?” said Mr. Meyerheim, looking up from his soup.

“Gone for a ride on one of Mr. Thornhill’s horses” said mamma.

"You'll make him quite English; you are too kind to him: and he'll want to go to London, whenever we lose you."

"I shall be glad to help him, whenever I can," said Charles Thornhill; "but I don't know that I shall be wanted in London this year at least—but we must talk English now for the children."

And accordingly they did so.

Mr. Meyerheim himself was the best and mildest of continental bankers. He was more simple than a child, which is strange when we take into consideration his knowledge of business, and the opportunities presented him of studying rascality in its happiest garb. He was one of those good men, who, from the deep well of worldly hardness, avarice, and scepticism, saw nothing but the blue sky above him. He loved Thornhill because he was honest and true. He did not know how he found it out; but he felt that it was so. Charlie was originally like him. The clay, the humanity of both was the same. Associations had altered them, or acted more upon one than the other. The impressions had been different, and stronger. No person could be less like Charlie's male friends than M. Meyerheim.

Madame was an excellent person. Stout, fair, with good hair and blue eyes. The best housekeeper in the world: a practical cook, and not ashamed of it. Admirable housewife: who religiously collected the table napkins after dinner, and ordered them to be pressed and put away for the morrow. A reader, and great philosopher on the science of the education of women; a little speculative, which was to the credit of the Bourse; it however never practically developed itself. She often wondered why her husband had not made his fortune in one *coup*. She was an intense admirer of him for all the excellences which he did not possess. She was kind, amiable, economical, and a match-maker: and as little like Charlie's female world as a woman could be.

"You are going too soon, Mr. Thornhill: another glass of Marcobrunner?"

"Work, Mrs. Meyerheim; your husband sets me a good example."

"But it is a model you have improved upon," said he.

Charlie went at five o'clock to Mainlust. He found the children and Miss Donald. He smoked his cigar, and chattered cheerfully with them, until he was joined by Baron Hartzstein.

That gentleman joined in the conversation with an idomitable

energy which repelled all coldness. He would take no denial; and though not formally presented, he made the acquaintance of the pretty governess by force of eloquence. Charlie was not a talker, so the baron had it all to himself.

The following evening the banker's lady had an "at home." A few friends dropped in, and Charlie remained at home to help to be entertained. About nine o'clock a very gay gentleman in a white uniform, Comte Degenfeld, had the honour to present his friend, the Baron Hartzstein of Vienna.

London society had not much changed since Charlie Thornhill had left England. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston dispensed their usual hospitalities in the country, and participated in the pleasures of legislation of the town. Lady Elizabeth Montague Mastodon was as great, as vulgar, and as good as ever, and continued to revere the mighty master whom she had married. Robinson Brown, *père et fils*, were as gorgeous as ever in their separate lines: the former, the solemn and gloomy larva, the vital principle of the latter, the useless and tawdry butterfly. There were the same balls, and the same people at them night after night. The same opera, and the same singers. The Rotten Row more rotten than ever. The same Newmarket, Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood, and the same horses, four years old instead of three. A few men, supposed to be good, were gone, gone to the bad: others, long supposed to be bad, were still to the good. Wilson Graves had never been heard of more; his servant was amusing himself in the Penitentiary. Lord Carlingford told everyone he was ruined, and gone to Rome to retrench. The same lady headed his establishment, and with the exception of his Melton expenses, it was difficult to believe him. There were drawing-rooms, and levees, as usual; and a few new scandals. Here and there really a man or woman overboard, but the great vessel of the state passed on its way. Excepting by Mint, Chalkstone, Palmer, and Co., Charlie was nearly forgotten. Tom still kept his head to the wind, and breasted the opinions and the innuendos of the British public. And what did it say of him? That he was almost ruined. Impossible! Listen, however, to excellent authority. Scene—Punter's, at 2 A.M.

"What's Thornhill lost this season?"

"Five-and-twenty thousand."

"You don't say so:" the speaker sighed, that he had not twenty-five thousand to lose.

"Fact: Thornhills is mortgaged all over. Came from old Stamp the lawyer: Tom goes to Como at the end of the season."

"Sorry for it: he's a capital fellow, and always stands a rattler on a good thing. Is there any truth about him and Dacre's eldest daughter?" Here the speaker looked at his own person, boots especially, by the flaming gas-light.

"Not a word: the old lady did her best, but caught the younger brother, which wouldn't do at all. I should think they're sorry they let him go now: he's the best spec of the two. He's gone into Mint and Chalkstone's house, and he'll have all his uncle's money." *Magna est veritas et prævalebunt.* Mrs. Dacre was, and had been, in piteous plight. Both husband and daughters thwarted her schemes and ruined her hopes. Mr. Dacre would not see the miseries of a match with the younger son; and supported Alice in her semi-rejection of the elder. Tom Thornhill with a clear unencumbered estate was the man of his county. Tom Thornhill deeply dipt, with a reputation of growing worse, and a passion for gambling, which not even the heaven-born beauty of Alice Dacre could subdue; Tom Thornhill, of Thornhills, unable to live on his estate; with the place coming to the hammer, and his affairs in the hand of Stamp, the great family lawyer and agent to half the nobility; Tom Thornhill, on the steps of Crockford's, cursing his fate, or sitting dolefully in his rooms in the Albany, was a different man to the Tom Thornhill the world beheld at St. James's; at the Clubs; at Tattersall's; on the Heath: or in the field. Cheerful, generous, charming; no man saw the invisible spectre, that walked arm and arm with its prey.

One only, and she most interested in never seeing it: Alice Dacre. From the earliest day of their intimacy she had seen it all. It was the vice that most shocked her, as incurable. And in spite of it all, no sooner was she assured of his preference than she loved him. And then she hoped against hope. He surely cared less for play. He was more in society, less at the card-table. She saw him everywhere: where was his time for the indulgence of his fatal passion? Surely it was *chassé* by another and purer influence. Alice had great faith in her father; and Mr. Dacre deceived neither himself nor his daughter. Mrs. Dacre would have deceived both. So Tom Thornhill proposed, in form, and was formally refused.

The misfortune of such a case is this—that no one can bell

the cat. No one told Tom Thornhill why he was rejected by the woman that manifestly loved him. Peasants would have known the truth: but it's not the way of the great world. So he turned and went away sorrowing; but bitter. She was capricious, cold, incomprehensible. At Gilsland he was an idol, debased, broken, prostrate, but he was an idol still.

And then Alice grew sad and thoughtful; and her eyes grew dim, and her figure more pliant, she was evidently bowed. And she sought not counsel, but love, from Edith; and the tree began to be supported by the tendrils that had clung to it in earlier times.

There had been a grand ball at St. James's—the last of the season. The Dacres were returning towards Grosvenor Street. Near the top of St. James's Street the crowd of carriages had become great, and a dead stoppage ensued. The place was alive with gas, illuminations, and people: it was as light as day. The girls were looking anxiously at the crowd, which scarcely separated to let their horses through, when they heard two young men of their acquaintance beneath the carriage window, in close conversation:—

“No, no: it was about a card, I tell you; they were playing piquet, and he laid him five thousand to one. I think that fellow Harlington took an unfair advantage, as Tom threw down his cards, considering it a certainty. However, what was to be done? He wrote him a cheque for the money, and wouldn't hear of a drawn game. Thornhills must go, and it has been in the family ever since James the First.”

“Charles the Second,” said Herbert Cardstone, whose baronetage dated from the former monarch, and who was a little tenacious of any unjust encroachment on the privileges of that most pedantic and eccentric king. “What a charming place it is! I should like to become——” At this moment his companion caught sight of the Dacres' carriage, and stopped the conversation abruptly.

Alice looked up, and at that moment, on the steps of the most notorious gambling-house in Town, she saw the haggard face of her rejected lover; his whole air was one of dejection and faded excitement. His handsome features were drawn, and his eyes had assumed an unearthly size.

He was looking without seeing, laughing without a smile, whilst his companions talked rapidly. She had not seen him for some weeks, and he was aged ten years. Edith followed her sister's

eyes, and as she took her cold hand in hers, she felt the silent tears drop noiselessly upon her naked wrist. From that day they talked no more of the ruined gambler. By the end of the season, Thornhills was in the market, and its owner was alone at Como.

About the same time Charles Thornhill sent for an English groom. He got the next thing to it, an Irish one, and his name was Daly.

CHAPTER XLI.

A GLIMPSE AT THE PAST.

“*Iustum ac tenacem propositi virum,*” &c., &c. HORACE, *Odes* iii. 3.

CHARLIE'S life at Frankfort continued to be exceedingly pleasant. He was one of those men who, without any personal regard for comforts or luxuries, had lived in society where such things become a second nature. He wore good clothes without knowing or attaching the smallest importance to it. He liked good dinners without caring to go in search of them. He rode good horses, and he expected his saddles and bridles to be well turned out; but it never occurred to him that they were so. I think, if Charlie Thornhill had been born in another rank of life, he might have been a sloven: he was now only indifferent, and it gave him a very high-caste appearance. There were few men of his age altogether better looking, and few so utterly free from personal vanity.

To persons who understand German society I need hardly explain that the domestic comforts, the manners, and the *ménage* are very different from those of the same class in England. M. Meyerheim had with difficulty been persuaded to receive the *employé* from his correspondents in England into his house. He was well off, had every comfort, and declined, for a long time, on the score of anticipated fastidiousness. Private friendship for Roger Palmer at length prevailed, who was anxious that his nominee should have the full benefit of a good commercial training, and do credit to his discernment whenever he should be recalled to London. The arrangement was made for

one twelvemonth. At the end of that time M. Meyerheim himself placed his rooms further at Charlie's disposal for as long a period as he should feel it convenient. This was too flattering to be overlooked ; and, though Charlie Thornhill decided upon removing to some commodious rooms within a few doors of the Meyerheims, it strengthened his intimacy and enabled him to regard his old quarters as a home. In fact, he lived as much in the one house as the other.

I am obliged to admit a truth which, I hope, may not militate against Charlie. He was attracted to the Meyerheims not altogether by his admiration for Madame, who was as remarkable for her good pastry as for her beauty, nor yet by his sincere regard for Monsieur, whom he saw daily in his official capacity on the other side of the street, but by the beauty and grace of his countrywoman, Kathleen Donald (as she was called in the family), and in whom he felt an undefinable interest. Something drew him towards her. Probably her helpless condition. Enough was known of her to conjure up an obscure and dingy home : parents, probably vulgar, certainly living in poverty or disgrace : her expatriation assuredly necessary from some cause or other, unconnected with herself. To a man of Charlie's age the self-assumed protection of a beautiful girl is always dangerous, however delicately paraded ; and it is seldom that either escape from the fire unscathed : never both. Strange to say, however, Charlie never thought of her without associating her with Edith Dacre. "Ah !" said he to himself, "how I wish Edith Dacre could see her ; she's just the sort of girl she would like."

And perhaps he was right. She was a very pretty girl indeed — simple-minded, but clever ; imaginative ; warm-hearted ; Irish ; attractive herself, and easily attracted by kindness and attention from others. Charles Thornhill saw all this, and he saw its dangers to her. He had been long enough on the Continent to know the general want of principle of most foreigners. He saw the girl flattered by the attentions of Hartzstein, and he had difficulty in persuading himself that his interference would be quite disinterested. There was a great deal of truth in Charlie.

As occasion offered he had been two or three times to England. When there his visits had been chiefly with his intimate friends, the Marstons, his mother, and Tom at Thornhills, Roger Palmer, of course, and to his uncle, who always received

him with the greatest affection. Henry Thornhill was beginning to show age. He was not the cheerful bachelor that rumour gave him credit for being. He was unostentatious to a degree, lived very substantially well, and gave his friends the best dinner and wine that could be put before them. But he had no luxuries for himself: a simple brougham, and a good hack of the cob sort. People thought it odd in a man of his temperament and antecedents: but he kept his own counsel; and the most that could be said was, that he was laying up a good purse for his nephew.

Charlie's relation with the Dacres was not altogether a satisfactory one. It was scarcely an engagement; and yet no two people could be more conscious of this position towards each other than Edith Dacre and he. This is not very uncommon in society when circumstances tend to render a positive betrothal imprudent, and a positive rejection cruel. Even Mrs. Dacre was but flesh and blood: and parents are not all so hard-hearted as the world makes out. It is damaging to the girl; but she would probably think herself ill used if the silken chain were snapped asunder, and utter liberty were restored to her. Like the home-bred bird, she would but perish in the wilderness when she essayed to stray.

It was evident to our hero that Tom's career had been madly reckless of late. So much he learnt from the Marstons. Lady Marston indeed spoke of his rejection by Alice Dacre as the turning-point of his life. "He was too good, Charlie, to be turned adrift on such a stream," said she. "I'm not one of those who like experiments upon *roués*; but your brother is a man who might have been guided by Alice Dacre: he wanted delicate treatment—an arm of iron with a hand of spun silk; and if ever I saw the woman, Alice Dacre is the one."

Charlie knew what she said was true, and grieved over it sincerely. He had lived in such a world that it never entered his head that Alice had a reason for her refusal beyond want of affection. He hardly understood this; but the rejection of such a man as Tom, upon principle, never occurred to him as a possible creed at Gilsland. Charlie did not understand Alice.

During a visit to Sir Frederick Marston, some conversation led to the opening of a subject which had a mysterious charm for Charlie,—the possibility of bringing to punishment the murderer of his father, and the ascertaining of the facts connected with the Kildonald property. One remarkable trait in

his character was "tenacity" to a purpose. He was slow in adopting views or suggestions. Once adopted, he held to them with a steadiness remarkable in everything but an Englishman and a bull-dog.

The facts are simple enough. Sir Frederick took great interest in his farms, and, holding some grass lands in his own hands, was in the habit of superintending the haymaking himself. As he rode round his fields, or strolled about with Lady Marston, he recognised again and again certain Irishmen whom he had engaged from year to year, and who, as a mark of grateful remembrance, brought a trifle or two as a present to his honour and the lady. Not unfrequently a couple of bottles of Irish whisky, such as even Sir Frederick's cellar could not produce, or a bit of Limerick lace of wonderful workmanship, which had been wrought expressly for the occasion. Lady Marston took much notice of these poor people, and did what she could to make them comfortable in the neighbouring village during the hay harvest on her husband's land. There's a great deal of good in the great world of which the little world wots not.

Not long before the time of which I am writing, a poor fellow called Peter Donovan had been taken ill on the Marston estate, and died. He had been uneasy as his end drew near, and a Roman Catholic priest, who had been sent for from the nearest town, had failed to make him quite easy under the circumstances in which he was placed. He was still very anxious to see Lady Marston once more. Now, Lady Marston was a fastidious person in all things connected with personal comfort, and no fonder of a peasant's dying chamber than you or I, or any one of my politest readers. But Lady Marston was a woman as well as a lady, and no more to be daunted by foul smells and wretched sights than Florence Nightingale, and some thousands of women all over the world, when the strong light of duty beckoned her to come on. By the time she reached the dying man his mind had become weakened and his speech incoherent. He muttered some thanks, and his happiness in seeing her, and then with a strong effort proceeded to make what might have been a confession, but for his evident intention that it should be acted upon. Lady Marston's mind was easily led back to a time which had never been forgotten by her or her husband. She now heard a confused account from the dying man of one Burke, and the Kildonald property; of certain

forgeries; of an old man, a former clerk to the aforesaid Burke; of his own brother, Michael Donovan; but all incoherently, and without any sort of chain which could connect it in Lady Marston's mind with poor Thornhill's death, or with his title to the property in question. There was one word which sharpened her curiosity: "The book, my lady: oh! it was the book I've been draming on to tell you this many a day."

"Book, Donovan! What book do you mean? The wine and water quick, Mrs. Gray."

Here Mrs. Gray administered the draught.

"The pocket-book; we sent it by the mail: there it went safe, my lady, to the direction, Sir Frederick Marston. 'Tis the mail: I gave it myself. More by token, Misther Burke bid me be careful. He sent me away afterwards: but I knowed it all by the papers. The murder, and the search, and the book, an' all: but I was in foreign parts; and now I'm come back to die."

There was very little more to be got out of poor Donovan. He never rallied; and his father confessor never came again. He might have disapproved of a plurality of confessors in the village. Lady Marston took her way thoughtfully to the Abbey. She walked up the steps of the portico, turned round in the hall to the right, and entered a small room, where she hoped to have found Sir Frederick. She was not deficient in good sense, and had enough to know that she could not consult anybody better than her own husband. In the present case she was certainly right. I wish all my female friends would adopt her views. If wrong, which might happen once in a hundred times, they could console themselves with having done the right thing, or with having no one to blame but themselves in having chosen a noodle instead of a man. Besides, obedience to delegated authority is the first of virtues. So the weaker vessel rang the bell.

"Is Sir Frederick in?"

"No, my lady; he is gone into the park with Mr. Thornhill."

"With Mr. Thornhill"—Lady Marston felt, without expressing, considerable surprise—"which Mr. Thornhill?"

"Mr. Charles." And whilst Lady Marston stood up at the window, and looked out meditating many things with herself, the servant left the room. Charlie was a valuable ally if anything was required to be done: and his unexpected arrival was useful.

To persons of quick temperament nothing is so disagreeable

as downright inactivity when burdened with business. It is all very well to say that if Lady Marston could have sat still, she would have seen her husband and Charlie in the course of an hour. But she couldn't sit, so she sallied out to meet them, and—missed them.

At dinner they met. It was a comfortable meal in autumn ; when one dines by daylight in the country, and finishes with a mysterious twilight. Candles were not brought in on this occasion. There was nobody else in the house ; and the subject was discussed without the exhibition of painful feelings, which daylight or candlelight must have evoked.

"Yes, Emily, I recollect the book well enough : it was not a pocket-book, but your poor father's betting-book, Charlie ;" here he turned to his guest : "he backed a horse of mine very heavily, called Benevenuto ; and he must have won but for a robbery. A man called Kildonald——"

"Yes, I remember, Sir Frederick : it's long since I heard the story, but I have never forgotten it ;" and Charlie clutched the stem of his claret glass, and drained it. The bottle was with him, and he filled himself a bumper.

"And now what's to be done, Frederick ? The poor fellow died this afternoon. You know the substance of our conversation. Can anything be made out of it to justify further steps ?"

"Everything. We have Burke, Michael Donovan—you're sure of the name ?—and the old clerk, if he's alive : I wish we had his name : and Cork must be the basis of our operations." Here Sir Frederick paused, helped himself, pushed the bottle to Charlie, and added, half-soliloquising, "Yes, we must try Ireland itself."

"I'll go at once," said Charlie, still attacking the '34.

"Take Diver, Charlie," said my lady.

"I don't like law, Lady Marston. I shall do better alone."

"I think not. Besides, what time have you ?"

"A fortnight good, I can take."

"That's something ; but you can't do without what is called 'a legal adviser.' You'll get into some scrape, Charlie ; and if you once alarm them, the opportunity will be lost."

"If you knew how I have it in my head. I've thought of it for years, and never forgotten a single thing you told me, when I first left old Gresham's."

"I believe it," said Sir Frederick.

"Then let me go. Poor Tom's abroad ; and it wouldn't suit him."

"Then take Diver," again urged Lady Marston.

"If you wish it, I will."

And then Lady Marston rose from the table, and her husband opened the door with a grace and kindness that would have done credit to the first week of their honey-moon.

"How's the stud, Charlie?"

"Not large, but very good for Frankfort. I've a neat Arab, and a good English horse that I bought at Barton's sale when I was over here at the end of last season."

"No racing, I suppose, about Frankfort, or within reach of you?"

"Paris on one side, and not very far off Baden Baden. They've taken to it very kindly. It's at present too much in the hands of English legs. But the young French world is so fond of it, they must succeed."

"It won't," said Sir Frederick.

"Why not?"

"Because, as soon as they take to betting, no horse will run on his merits : and then will follow handicaps, half-mile races, roping, welshing, and the whole train of evils to which we are accustomed. You know foxes are hunted and eels are skinned, but it doesn't follow that either is a pleasant amusement." Sir Frederick could just see to pour out one more glass of claret. "Shall we ring for candles?"

"No, thank you, I love this light."

"Or want of it?"

"Whichever you please. I can't talk by daylight."

"Is that a great deprivation, Charlie?"

"Sometimes. When I'm much interested, I'm generally able to say what I mean ; but I often envy fellows who say it so much better."

"Ah ! you're an admirer of eloquence. But all men are eloquent when they know their subject and feel it. That rascal Thoroughpin is the most eloquent man of my acquaintance. He never ceases talking when he wants me to buy ; and persuades me against my sense, interests, and convictions. Gladstone himself never accomplished that."

"I've no self-confidence."

"Then don't go to Ireland without Diver. Have you finished?"

Lady Marston was pouring out tea at a small round table. The room was glowing with light: a sudden change. Charlie buried his long body in a fauteuil near Lady Marston, while Sir Frederick took up a pamphlet and prepared to read.

Lady Marston looked at Charlie, gave him his tea, and said, carelessly enough, "Have you seen or heard of the Dacres lately?" The question was simple, but Charlie felt like a ship on fire. Some men, poets probably, would have said that his colour came and went: the truthful historian is compelled to declare that it only came. There was no "go" about it at all. He got redder and redder as he answered truly—

"I came from there yesterday."

"How are they all? Alice looked ill through the season; and when she was at Thornhills she was exceedingly unwell."

"Thornhills is damp in the autumn, it's so surrounded by trees." By this time Charlie was getting a natural colour again; he ventured to look at his questioner.

"I'm glad they go to Thornhills. Since Tom has been on the Continent the place is lonely for my mother, and she seems to have taken to the girls." Charlie swallowed a little confusion in his tea, which being hot, made his eyes water.

"Where is your brother? Does he think of coming back?"

"He was at Naples last winter. Carlingford persuaded him to go there from Como. He'll not come back to live at Thornhills, I fear."

"I've no patience with Tom Thornhill," said Lady Marston, viciously biting a piece of thin crisp toast, which gave peculiar force to her verdict. "He might have been anything or have done anything: he has thrown away too many chances. As a country gentleman, six years ago, he was the man of his day. Why doesn't he get into Parliament?"

"He says politicians are so dishonest," said Charlie shyly.

"What's that?" inquired Sir Frederick, looking up from his pamphlet.

"Oh! I beg your pardon; it's only Tom's idea of politics. Of course he knows nothing about it: but he says political integrity is 'all my eye.'"

"Well, perhaps he's not far wrong. Does he find men more scrupulous on the turf?"

"He says they're nearly as bad, but that he's prepared for it there. Have you any horses, Sir Frederick?"

"None in training: I've given it up. I breed a little for

amusement; but the turf is very different from what it was when your poor father and I went on it thirty years ago. Talking of the turf, what has become of Wilson Graves?"

"He went abroad after the match between my brother's horse and Robinson Brown's mare." Charlie said nothing more.

"I heard he lost a great deal of money: and something was said about his trying to get at the horse. Of course nobody believed that, men do tell such wonderful falsehoods."

"What's become of young Robinson Brown, Lady Marston? I've not seen him since the match."

"He's going to be married to Lady Susan Trumpington. He has been most liberal about the settlements, and the Trumpington property is unembarrassed once more."

"And Harlington?"

"Nobody knows anything about Harlington. He was exceedingly attentive to Alice Dacre; and as he was certainly the best match of the season, everybody settled it to their own satisfaction. Your old aunt, Lady Casterton, was especially sharp-sighted; but it all came to nothing; and he disappeared from the scene. Is there any truth in the report that your mother is to leave Thornhills? We have a place in this neighbourhood that would exactly suit her and Mary Stanhope."

"I think not. All sorts of stories were about, I've no doubt, when my brother went abroad; and it was really supposed to be in the market; but Tom won't have her disturbed, as long as she likes to live there: and it wouldn't be very easy to let it."

"Have you seen your mother yet, since you came from Frankfort?"

"Not yet," sheepishly.

"Nor your Aunt Casterton?"

"No one but you," flatteringly.

"And the Dacres. How goes on the banking?"

"Very flourishingly. I'm glad I took your advice. It's better than soldiering."

"Now take some more. Go and call on Roger Palmer, you owe him a visit; and your uncle Henry: you have no better friend in the world. And now, Fred, if you and Charlie want a cigar, you'd better have it; it's growing late. Good night."

In three days' time Charlie was steaming from Bristol to Cork, in company with Mr. Diver.

CHAPTER XLII.

IRELAND.

"The thicket is beset, he cannot 'scape."—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Act v, Scene 3.

THE voyage to Cork is at no time a pleasant one ; and when, after about six-and-thirty hours of intolerable pitching and tossing, Charlie received for reply to a natural demand as to their whereabouts, that "faix, his honour was *on the say*," he managed to climb out of his berth, and nearly wrung the neck of the cabin-boy. He was a shock-headed young ruffian, and so appreciative of a joke, that he had already been thrashed for this one no less than five-and-twenty times. He only escaped when the body was too sick to defend the mind. The getting up to do anything proved a great amendment, and finding, after a hurried toilette and as much cold water as he could get hold of, that he was not more than two-thirds drunk and one asleep, Charlie scrambled upon deck in time to catch the first glimpse of Cove and the Black Rock. In a few hours more they were in Cork.

If this was about the beginning of the second volume of a fine old-fashioned half-bound marble-covered affair, instead of being, as it is, near the beginning of the end, I should delay my reader to carry him a tour through Ireland, or at least a certain portion of it. I recommend him, if he wishes to know anything about it without the trouble of going there, to apply to some of the numerous tourist volumes, headed Killarney, or Glengariff, or Bantry Bay, which about embraces the parts traversed by Mr. Diver and our friend. As regards the going there oneself, that's a matter of taste. I liked it: but then I'm fond of scenery, character, fighting, and general excitement. I don't dislike roughing it here and there. Can do without feather beds, carpets, a valet, or a fireplace ; can sleep with my window open or shut, broken or whole, with my door locked or unlocked : am a convenient height, say 5 ft. 10 in., so that I can wear anybody's clothes of reasonable size ; and 11st. 8lb., so that I can ride anybody's horse of reasonable weight. I am equally handsome, with or without a beard, having tried both ; am lavish of money when I have it, and can make a shilling go

as far as—twelvepence (and there's an enormous difference) when I'm hard up. I prefer truffles, and clear turtle, and cliquot sec, with every conceivable delicacy of the French cuisine ; but I can live upon bread, beer, whisky, Swiss cheese, and Dorsetshire draught cider, which latter drink I take to be the nastiest thing in existence, and calculated only for the "*durissima illa messorum*," which has nothing to do with the army : a mistake not altogether impossible to the unlearned.

If any man can do this, let him knapsack the Tyrol and Ireland ; if not, let him stop at home. By the way, a great many persons like to travel in order to say that they have been to Constantinople. A word of advice. "If that's your motive, say it, and don't go." Because, my dear friend, in your case, if ever a lie was worth the money, that's it : and with the assistance of Murray, you may "forge all the endorsements, as well as the bill."

"Now, what's the first thing to be done, Mr. Diver?" said Charlie, as they sat over their breakfast on the following morning. They had seen, he it remarked, the Custom House, the County Prison, the Episcopal Palace, the Infirmarys, and the quays, and had already admired the female population of Cork, which disported itself on the day before on the Mardyke, so that the question had evident relation to business.

"I've a friend, or old acquaintance, once a lawyer, now a magistrate, who may assist us in this business."

Nicholas Corcoran lived in a handsome house near the centre of the modern town, south of the river Lee. He was the last of the pigtails, wore black breeches and well-blacked boots up to the knee ; a square cut, straight-collared blue coat, with metal buttons ; a very soft and voluminous white neckcloth, and a long striped waistcoat of buff colour. He was a shrewd, clever old man—handsome, delicate-looking in figure and feature, with sharp grey eyes and dark lashes and brows, which contrasted curiously with his white hair, which was thinly scattered on his brow, and grew more thickly and wavily on each side of his temples. He was a good judge of law and claret ; and dispensed both with equal hospitality. His reception of Diver and Charlie was distinguished by great urbanity, and a determination that they should dine with him that day. In the meantime what could he do for them ?

"Did I know Burke?" said the old gentleman, after an explanation of their visit had been laid before him, as far as was

needful. "Indeed I did: sorrow a gentleman in Cork that didn't know him, for he robbed us all. But he was the best sportsman and the greatest scoundrel I ever saw; and they seldom go together. If he's not dead, he's a fatter no good now."

"You've heard of an old clerk he had, who——"

"What, Phelim O'Brian? he is in Cork still, and a greater scoundrel than the other. If there's anyone can tell you anything about Burke, it's Phelim. He's been accused of forgery and every other crime in the world, short of murder, since his absence, and might have been guilty of both."

"And where shall we find him between this and six o'clock?"

"You must cross the bridge at the bottom of the next street to this, and that leads to the old town on the north side of the river. But stay, the streets are narrow and irregular: don't be afraid of dirt or misery, Mr. Thornhill, my servant shall put you in the way." After many thanks, Thornhill and Diver withdrew.

"Mrs. O'Brian, the mother of Phelim, received them. She was eighty-five years of age, and looked a hundred. She was muttering a low chant over a small turf fire, on which was a kettle; she took but little notice of the strangers, and when asked for her son, pointed upwards—whether she meant in heaven, or only up-stairs, no one knew. The two men only guessed that it was not the former, so chose the latter alternative. They ascended, however, and there found Phelim and a long-coated terrier.

Below-stairs nothing could have been more wretchedly miserable than the whole appearance of things. It divulged the last stage of poverty previous to absolute starvation. Up-stairs, things were more cheerful. Phelim was a miserable-looking object himself—lean, lank, and dirty, and bearing a strong resemblance to his mamma; but he was surrounded by business, in the way of writing materials, chairs, a table, a bottle of whisky, though it was early in the day, and a pipe which he laid aside on the entrance of the two.

"Maybe I'll be able to do something for you, gentlemen?"

"Nothing at present—much hereafter, if you can only inform us where Mr. Burke is to be found."

Phelim looked up with a scared look; and then, recovering himself, asked if it was "Mr. Burke of the Blackwater Villas, or of Tivoli, on the river, a little way out of town."

It was neither—and this led to an explanation of *the* Mr. Burke in question. And then he knew nothing. And no one knows the immovability of an Irishman's determined stupidity, till he has tried it. He almost forgot the name; nearly denied his own identity; and, when compelled to admit that he had been his clerk at the time of his quitting the country, pretended never to have heard of him, or from him, from that day to this.

"There's an estate called the Kildonald Estate. Who receives the rents?"

"That's Mr. Burke himself that receives them." Here he looked uncomfortable, and a gradual tremor crept over Phelim O'Brian.

"But he's not been in England for years; and yet the rents go somewhere."

"Is it the rents? Sorrow any rents we get. It's the agent in London—he comes down twice a year."

"What's his name, Phelim? Come, don't be afraid. It will be a fine thing for you, when the business is righted. You'd like a little agency round here?" (May Mr. Diver be forgiven—Charlie allowed him to lie.)

"Indeed, it would suit me, and the ould woman down stairs."

"It's possible, Phelim; but where's Burke?"

"How would I know? didn't he go to Australia, and then to America? leastways they say the New Yorkers was puzzled quite. I'd a thought he'd ha' met wi' his match there, anyhow."

"But where is he now?" said Charlie, putting an obviously leading question.

"Honour bright, I don't know. I wish I did."

"What would you do?"

"By my soul, I'd make him curse the day ever he cheated Phelim O'Brian out of a year's wages."

"But you don't know where he is?"

"I don't, yer honour."

"Leave us together, and I'll see you at dinner," said the wily lawyer (aside.) "Well, Thornhill (aloud), it's no use—he knows nothing, so we'll be off. Good morning, much obliged——" he got thus far, but no farther, for no sooner had Phelim O'Brian heard the name of Thornhill, than, rising suddenly from his chair, he repeated the name three or four times, and, resuming his seat, seemed with difficulty to restrain himself.

Charlie, who had sense enough to know that Diver was the proper person to hunt the fox, though he might ride to him, obeyed him implicitly ; and, though he fully comprehended the value of this exclamation, he turned round, and made his way down the ruined staircase without eliciting a remark from the old lady in the chimney-corner.

He was no sooner gone, than Mr. Diver brought his artillery to bear ; and the town was not long before it began to hang out signals of distress or capitulation. It was evident that Phelim O'Brian was to be bought. Burke had left him at his utmost need : and, in placing the Atlantic between himself and his country, never counted on his animosity.

Money and safety were the two grand things for which Phelim stipulated. The first was a certainty, the latter nearly so : for the best of all reasons, that he seemed to have known very little, and acted entirely under Burke's directions. Of the papers connected with the Kildonald property he knew nothing, excepting that they had been stolen from the office on the night of the robbery. There were others whom it was absolutely necessary to find before much could be made out of the business. There were the two Donovans. One was dead, we know, the other was nobody knows where. He had had half-a-dozen aliases : he was Donovan, and Heenan, and Daly. To Mr. Diver these names conveyed nothing ; but when Charlie heard them he pricked up his ears. There was one George, too, an illegitimate son of Kildonald's, as they said ; he knew something about Burke, but he had never been heard of. One thing only came out after three days' examination, and an endless effort to make out something about Michael Donovan, quite unsuccessfully. Burke had deliberately forged the date and the name to several deeds, drawn out by Phelim himself, after the death of old Mr. Kildonald, conveying to him certain interest in the estate for so many thousand pounds received on account, but which thousands had never been paid at all. To prove this it was necessary to secure Mr. Phelim, and Charlie very wisely left it to Mr. Diver to make use of his professional knowledge for the purpose.

When Charlie left Cork he had enjoyed some good dinners at Mr. Corcoran's table ; he had seen something of the beauty and easiness of the Cork ladies ; he had tested their inflammability to a certain extent, and found them as soft as gun-cotton, and equally combustible ; but he had made no progress in the dis-

covery of his father's murderers, and went back to England more determined than ever of purpose.

Of course he ran down to Thornhills. His mother was all affection, as usual; but while she talked to him, and of his prospects, it was evident that she was thinking of Tom. Mary Stanhope thought they had both been spoilt; and as to Tom's folly, it was perfectly inconceivable. She hoped Charlie was not making a fool of himself with those Dacre girls. They ought to marry rich men. Edith was flighty, and would make a capital wife for young Lord Buddicome, who came out at an Exeter Hall meeting on the Young Women's Mental Discipline Association. He would have a home specimen to practise on. Alice was as proud as Lucifer—though, poor dear thing, she certainly was very ill. When Charlie wanted to make a fool of himself, he'd better do so with a banker's or alderman's daughter. She didn't know what was come to the young people of late years. Charlie's own extravagance was quite sinful: he didn't play, but he spent it all on himself. And when he took leave, which he did in a couple of days, she gave him a cheque for a hundred pounds, "to buy a little present," from Aunt Mary. She had made it two hundred to Tom, as being the most in want and the least deserving of it.

He forgot neither his Uncle Henry nor Roger Palmer. The former he found, as usual, in Pall Mall, in the midst of business. Everything had a prosperous look about him but the man himself. He looked worn, prematurely aged, and overworked—a dull stone in a gorgeous setting. He was to Charlie the same as ever; touched lightly, but kindly, on Tom's extravagance, and hoped Thornhills might be saved. He could not buy it, or he would. "If ever you have the chance, Charlie, don't throw it away."

Charlie walked off thoughtfully enough. If his uncle did not put it in his power, who would? By this time he had reached Roger Palmer's. The old man was delighted with everything his *protégé* had done. His services would be very valuable in another year or two at home.

The first person Charlie saw on his return to Frankfort was his own groom. He looked very steadily at the man, and then began to wonder at his own stupidity. If everyone was as honest, what an admiring world this would be! He recognised him directly. This was the man who held his horse, who stole his dog, who sent him to Whitechapel, and who called on him

at Armstrong's. And now he saw the difference. The one character was that of a cunning-looking, half-ferocious sort of person, with bullet head, ragged whiskers, unkempt, unshorn, who looked lost without the attendance of Calcraft. The other was that of an active, cleanly, close-shaven, practical groom. Not the fine gentleman, who spent one half of the year at Melton and the other between Newmarket and London ; but there was a something still in the man's eye that recalled his former characteristics at once.

"How are the horses, Donovan ?" said his master.

The man jumped round as if he had been shot. All colour left his cheeks ; and then, as suddenly recollecting himself, he said, "I ask yer pardon, sir ; did ye spake ?"

"I asked after the horses : that's all. Is the brown English horse all right ?"

"Yes, sir, they're both right enough ; and his feet's improving, anyhow. I kept his heels nice and open ; and I wouldn't let 'em even cut away his frog. Baron Hartzstein's man wants the master to buy him."

"If he's big enough to carry me, I may as well keep him as sell him."

"He's the horse that can do it, yer honour : he's near thoroughbred, and has great hocks and a good back. He'd make a steeple-chaser, if he knows how to lep."

"I'll ride him at half-past three ;" saying which, Charlie turned from his stables, and made his way to Madame Meyerheim's. "I think we know where to put our hands upon Mr. Donovan when we want him." And Charlie entered the *porte cochère*, and rang the bell.

"What, Miss Donald, all alone ? Well, I hope you are all as I left you. But you look unwell yourself," added he, after a pause, in which he stood looking at the pretty eyes of his compatriot.

"Miss Donald," said Bertha, "is very naughty, I'm sure."

"Why so, Bertha ? what makes you think so ?" said Charlie, encouragingly.

"Ah I know, but I won't tell. I know she is, because she's just like me." Bertha was a flat-faced, blue-eyed little girl, with flaxen hair.

"Not much, Bertha, I should think."

"Yes, but she is. She's always crying now ; and I only cry when I'm naughty."

Charlie looked round, and Kathleen jumped up, and left the room.

"Well, Bertha, and what have you been doing since I went away? Who's been here to play with you?" And Charlie drew the child towards him.

"Oh! there's another gentleman been here instead of you; and he goes to the Thier Garten, and to Mainlust, and—and—but I don't like him so well as you, he talks such funny English." Little pitchers have good ears as well as long.

"Really, that's kind. And what's his name?"

"I don't know his name, but he came here with Comte Degenfeld."

Charlie changed the conversation, and after chatting with Madame Meyerheim, and hearing that the officers were to give a grand ball at the Casino, he took his leave.

So his friend Hartzstein was not gambling at Homburg. There must be some attraction to keep him in Frankfort—perhaps his friendship for Degenfeld, or his pleasure in Herr Meyerheim's society, or—something else.

Charlie's Irish groom was not exactly what he seemed. His life had been a chequered one. He was well brought up, for a cottar's son. The priest and the squire had stood his friend when a boy, and had sent him to school. More than that, they saw that he learnt, and had half-a-crown in his pocket. But he took to evil courses: he took to poaching and horsebreaking instead of quilldriving in Burke's office, for which he was intended. Then he began to wander further afield. He became a vagabond frequenter of race-meetings, and Burke discarded him. Presently he returned, starving, begging; and want drives out honesty when it has a tendency to go out of itself. Burke had something for him to do, which he did, unscrupulously and effectively. And the two had a hold on one another; but the rich and respectable man's grip was the tighter. Poverty has a lying look when confronted with wealth. By-and-by he got honester, and tried to work, but it took him a great many years to do so. He was a tout, then a stable-boy, then he became a helper in some large stables, and when he got the chance he became a groom. He had not been so happy since he was a child in his father's house on the Kildonald estate; and the name of Thornhill had a mysterious charm for him. He had been of service to Charlie before this; and we love those we can serve. Aristotle gives a selfish reason for this in our own vanity—perhaps the true one.

A few days later, Charlie was smoking in the stable, a reprehensible but not unpleasant practice, when Daly said to him—

“Baron Hartzstein was looking at your English horse, yer honour: he wants to buy him.”

“He may have him: I’ve seen one belonging to a Hungarian gentleman.” Charlie looked very indifferent.

“He goes well in harness: it’s a grand horse he is in leather.”

“It’s just what he’s fit for. If he wants any information, the baron can ride and drive him (I suppose he’s quiet), and the price is eighty pounds.”

“I’ll be puzzled entirely, faix, with the pounds. It’s about francs and florins he’s always axing. Maybe I’ll tell him too little.”

“Then say two thousand francs: that’s about the mark.” The next day the horse was sold.

Charlie sat in a brown study one day, about three o’clock, smoking a German pipe. It was rarely that he indulged in that way; but his cigars were getting low, and he had no fancy for the produce of Bremen or Hamburg in lieu of the Havannah. So he took to a pipe. “Come in,” said he; and there entered a not frequent visitor or two: Degenfeld, De Weiler, and Hartzstein.

“Herr Carl becomes quite the German,” said Degenfeld.

“How’s the pipe? Tastes he good?” said De Weiler.

“Middling, thank you, baron,” replied Charlie. “There’s a cigar for you. Hartzstein, those are some of Tom’s: you’d better take one.”

The two barons helped themselves, and the Comte followed their example. Charlie rang the bell. “Bring up a bottle of steinwein.”

“Do you go to the ball given by the grand Duke next week, Mr. Thornhill?” said De Weiler, who was not an old acquaintance, and consequently more formal than Hartzstein and Degenfeld. “I hear some of your countrymen are coming over from the spas.”

“Yes; I have a carte, and intend going.”

“And your pretty countrywoman?” said Degenfeld: “Hartzstein raves about her.”

“I agree with him,” said Charlie; “but she’s not quite a countrywoman: she’s Irish.”

"Irish or English, will she be there?" said Hartzstein.

"I hardly think so. The Meyerheims are going, I presume ; but——"

"I have *carte blanche*, and if Madame Meyerheim——"

"I should not like to propose it to Madame Meyerheim, myself," interposed Thornhill, "if I were the Grand Duke's most intimate friend ; and I don't think the Baroness Hartzstein would feel complimented if she were placed in the same situation as Miss Donald."

Here the conversation dropped : and Charlie inquired what the baron thought of his new purchase. He liked him much : the horse rode well, and was good in harness ; a capital match to the one he had brought with him from England. Young Phelps, the *attaché* to the embassy, had offered Hartzstein a hundred for him.

Before the three gentlemen rose to go, Degenfeld drew nearer to Charlie. "Mr. Thornhill, I expect an Englishman to dine with me and our friends here, next week, at the *Hôtel de Russie*, privately : will you join us !"

"Certainly, with pleasure."

"What day will suit you? We can make it any day."

"Say Wednesday, then. Adieu, adieu!" They all shook hands, and parted. Two of their sabres clanked down stairs, and they sallied into the Zeil. Charlie finished his pipe, and went to the bank.

"Confound that fellow Hartzstein's impudence," thought he : "these Germans are the most impertinent fellows alive. When an Englishman means wrong, or does wrong, he is seldom proud of it. But these fellows are as fond of their vices as a North American Indian of his scalps. Poor girl! I wonder what old Donald and his wife are like. Upon my soul, she stands in a very awkward position. Meyerheim's as good as gold ; so is his wife. But they know no more of fellows like Hartzstein than I do of astronomy. It certainly is no business of mine. I wonder whether Degenfeld knows anything about it. What's every man's business is nobody's business. It's every man's business to protect a poor girl from an unprincipled blackguard like Hartzstein. If she wasn't so good-looking I'd do something towards stopping it myself : but there isn't a soul here or in England that wouldn't say I was in love with the girl myself." Such were Charlie's meditations as he sat on a three-legged stool, staring at vacancy : and no man can deny that, though slow and old-

fashioned in his notions, they were tolerably just—for the Dunce of the Family.

The day before the intended dinner at Degenfeld's, Charlie sat at his desk in an inner room of the bank. He had had letters from England, detailing the course of events in Ireland. Diver was in full cry, and hoped not only to secure the testimony of Donovan, but the person of Burke himself. The latter was living under his own name not twelve months ago, as the rents had been received from the Kildonald estate, and receipts signed by his agent in his name. That gentleman had not yet appeared : doubtless he would be found within a month of the next rent-day. Burke had been traced to America ; and there, finding the aborigines as barbarous and the settlers as unprincipled as himself, he had disappeared. Charlie was requested to be as quiet as possible, and to awake no suspicion of the intended investigation.

The letters from Lady Marston, and one from Mr. Dacre, who occasionally wrote to him, were full of English gossip or family news. Tom's affairs were better than had been expected. His mother and Mary Stanhope were at Thornhills for the winter. Lord Audley had proposed and been rejected by Alice Dacre, and Robinson Brown was going to be married to Lady Susan Trumpington : lots of blood for the money, as the Piccadilly Phenomenon might observe. Both letters spoke of the rapidly failing health of Henry Thornhill, who was gone into the country for change of air ; and Mr. Dacre seemed to think that he might pass the next winter in the south of Italy—he did not say for what reason.

“ A letter by private hand for Mr. Thornhill,” said one of the clerks, opening the door of Charlie's room. He placed it on the table. The edging was black as well as the seal, and the handwriting was unknown to him. It had a lawyer-like appearance. Charlie was but mortal himself, so he turned it and twisted it, and looked at the crest, and made a dozen conjectures. He never guessed right ; and, with some fear of undefined calamity, he broke open the letter. When opened he did not look at it for a minute or more ; and when he did, the truth was told in a most unceremonious fashion. His uncle had died without a warning, and without a struggle. Henry Thornhill was no more. Enclosed was a letter, the last that had been written by the deceased, addressed to Charlie, and to be forwarded to him as soon as circumstances permitted. As its contents concern no one more

than the recipient, and may well remain undisclosed until the requirements of the story bring them to light, I shall try the reader's patience, if he feel any curiosity to know them.

CHAPTER XLIII.

INTENTIONS.

Of course in London the death of a man like Henry Thornhill created a sensation ; but it was quite as much to know what he had left behind him, as anything else, which made him the subject of conversation at the West End Clubs. He was regretted by the men of his own time, for he had a happy knack of securing the friends he had made. Some few women, with whom he was on more than usually intimate terms, were his sincerest mourners : as a rule, he was unpopular with them. Lady Marston especially mourned for a right hand : he was the only man, besides her husband, whose opinion she particularly cared to have when the case involved a delicacy. Mrs. Thornhill liked her husband's brother, but she never had appreciated him : he was not demonstrative. Mary Stanhope understood him better. The fact is, he was a very clever man, a very honest man, and a cynic. Familiarity with his brother's family was not to be looked for ; and he may therefore be excused for seeing none of the virtues of Tom Thornhill. Charlie was his favourite : he said so, and took every opportunity of showing his preference ; and in the world's eye Charlie was heir to his thousands.

Charlie meantime had leisure to digest the last words of Uncle Henry. "He was a good fellow," said Charlie to himself ; "and though it's not so pleasant as it might have been, I'm sorry for him. I hadn't a better friend in the world, I believe, excepting my mother, and Lady Marston, and Mary Stanhope, and——. Well ! there are lots of 'em when you begin to add them up. Why in the world did he make Roger Palmer one of his executors ? and why must I talk matters over with him ? The two men are so different. I should like to know what there is in that other letter which I am not to know at present. Here, Daly, take this note to Comte Degenfeld's : there's no answer."

The young Englishman expected to dinner was Teddy Dacre, so that they had a narrow escape of meeting ; and Dacre did not know that Charlie was in Frankfort. Dacre was on his way to England, having leave from the embassy at Berne.

That's a very pleasant life, that attachéship. When I see the gallant young fellows at high jinks with Mademoiselle Crinoline of the Variétés, or the lovely Adèle of the Palais Royal, disporting themselves at the bal masqué, or at some continental Cremorne, shying champagne corks across half a dozen little tables to the charming Iphigénie and her dear Duc, who are fighting aloud over the leg of a pullet, and shocking the respectable company between them, then I see the advantages of our diplomatic system, and admire the pertinacious determination of our rising Talleyrands to acquire a correct accent. Teddy Dacre had done all this, and was now acting the sterling character of the virtuous young English gentleman to the edification of his co-attachés and the distinguished circle of which an attaché is always a segment. He was very fond of Charlie, and Charlie of him ; and I think, had they met, Charlie might have employed his diplomatic talents on a special mission of some importance.

"What the deuce has become of Henry Thornhill's money?" said Sir Herbert Cardstone to his friend De Beauvoir, as they walked steadily over a turnip-field on the estate of the former.

"Aw—aw—speculated—speculated. Lost every shilling. Mysterious case altogether. Very sudden : only ill two hours." (He had been ill of bronchitis one fortnight, and eventually died of inflammation of the trachera.) "——hard on Charlie Thornhill, I call it."

"Why so? That brown dog of yours is drawing."

These were old-fashioned, middle-aged sportsmen, and used dogs.

"Confound the dog : how wild the birds are. What right has a fellow to die in that way, and leave nothing, when the only reason one could have an uncle a banker is to inherit his money? A banker without money is a —— anomaly. There goes another brace."

"Have you ever seen a regular driving day?" said Sir Herbert.

"Lots of 'em. Day at Bedfont. Gad ! I believe you. My old governor was a member of the club." Here it occurred to De Beauvoir that he had changed foxes—at least he and Sir Herbert were not on the same, so he pulled up.

"I mean driving partridges : we do it down here sometimes late in the season, without dogs," explained Sir Herbert Cardstone.

"Oh ! partridges ? To be sure. By Jove ! we had a grand day last year at Thornhills. Tom Thornhill was there, and the Dacres, and old Dorrington, and Corry, and one or two men. We walked in a line over all the turnips in the two parishes, with six or seven beaters between each of us. Capital fun it is, too. Only Tom walks such a pace and shoots so quickly that no one has a chance with him."

"Who has Thornhills now ? Tom's away," said the baronet.

"Mrs. Thornhill and Miss Stanhope are living there. Tom talks of coming home for the shooting in December ; and Charlie, I fancy, will be over again—unless this death of his uncle makes some change in his plans."

"I should like to have Thornhills better than any place I know," said Sir Herbert Cardstone. (That's the second time he would have said it in this book, but we stopped him before.) "But what difference should his uncle's will make to Charlie's prospects, except the loss of the money ?"

"Charlie," said De Beauvoir, who was not a bad fellow, but a club gossip, "was supposed to be engaged to Edith Dacre, and the prospects were brightened, but dimly, by his expectations from his uncle. The light was very small, you know, but it was bright enough to keep up—what you may call it—hope, as the poet says, and now Charlie's rushlight is out altogether. I don't think the old lady will stand even Charlie without something more than a bank salary, which is all he has at present."

"Why, De Beauvoir, they used to talk about you for one of those girls."

"The world's given to lying, Cardstone ; and you're quite old enough to know it. You've been married a hundred times, only you didn't hear it : that's all. I quite think a man might do worse, and not burn his fingers much. They're both charming girls."

"Why doesn't Thornhill marry ? There must be lots of girls with a few thousands that would jump at him," said Cardstone.

"Thornhill is very young, but is almost fit for nothing but a race-course or a card-table. The worst of it is, that he's hardly bad enough for the former, and too good for the latter. If he'd been anything but a gentleman, gad ! what a fellow he'd have been ! But I should like to know where the girls with the few thousands are : one of them might do for me."

Just then Nell pointed, and was backed by the brown dog, and the two forgot the very existence of the Thornhills and the Dacres, and concentrated their energies upon what proved to be—a false point. But the reader knows how the world was informed upon the point in question.

About the same time two scenes were enacting in Germany with which our hero was directly or indirectly concerned, as will appear hereafter. On a dark warm night in autumn, or now just verging towards winter, three men stood in a small, well-furnished room with folding doors. There was in the room a round table, on which were two packs of cards, scattered about, and a dice-box and backgammon-board. On the small table on one side of the room was a tray with some half-emptied glasses and two empty bottles, one of champagne, the other of a labelled Rhein wine, and a stone bottle of Seltzer water. All three men were smoking cigars. One was a tall dark-haired and dark-eyed man, very pale, with very handsome features, but a close, cruelly-compressed mouth: he was playing with a pair of dice, which he held in his hand, and rolled over and over on the table.

“One more main, Burke,” said he, turning a cigar in his mouth.

“No, no, Morris; be easy. The baron will give you your revenge another time. Have another glass of champagne, and let’s turn in: his lordship’s ’most at his hotel by this time.” The other two were Burke and the Baron Hartzstein. Morris rose steadily enough, drained a tumbler of wine and Seltzer water, and wishing them, “Good-night,” took his leave.

“Who’s that man, Mr. Burke?” said the baron, as he closed the door.

“A very successful gambler, Baron Hartzstein.”

“He lost heavily to-night, surely. He owes you money.”

“He can afford to pay for it. What luck Lord Carlingford had, to be sure!”

I am glad of the opportunity of saying that Burke’s scheme on that profligate young man had utterly failed. He lost much money in England on the turf, but here he seemed always to win. He drank like a fish, ate a most excellent dinner, and ended invariably by carrying off all the ready money at the table, with some valueless I O U’s into the bargain. I hope he hadn’t sold himself, &c., &c. He was certainly economising in his way.

After some preliminary conversation, in which language

asserted its right to conceal meaning, Hartzstein seemed suddenly to grow tired of beating about the bush.

"You say you know the father and mother; and can assist me?"

"I can and will," said Burke, with a fierce vehemence. "And now I'll tell ye why,—because I hate him, and all connected with him. You say you are prepared to go any lengths to attain your object. There is no risk; no danger, set about properly; but there must be money; and I——"

"Anything you want."

"Your carriage and horses: hired horses create suspicion, or direct it."

"Everything is at your service. Take my servants; and when you have arranged your plan, let me know, and we'll fix the day. The girl is well enough disposed for the journey, could I but once get her away from other influences. Do I make myself understood?" The baron spoke in German, which Burke, with the natural facility of an Irishman, had easily mastered during his residence abroad.

"Perfectly. And my services, baron?"

"Cannot be esteemed too highly." The baron took his leave, and strolled slowly down the hill, ten minutes' walk to the middle of the Spa. His mind dwelt, not ill-temperedly, but with a curious vanity, upon one topic. "Charlie Thornhill, now we shall see what will become of your English woman."

As Burke shut the door of "The Mount," and prepared to lie down in the inner chamber, he thought with malicious cruelty on one topic for some time. "Now, Arthur Kildonald, we shall see how you like the tricks of *legerdemain*, in which you have taken no part."

One morning Charlie Thornhill took his hat and strolled leisurely along the Zeil. Turning up three or four steps on the left, he found himself in a flagged passage, with a small window barred with brass wire and closed: below it was a small door. "Hier darf man nicht rauchen!" So Thornhill threw away his cigar, and knocked at the little door.

"A gruff, broad German face, with stiff blue frock-coat, and a strip of yellow braid on each shoulder, presented——no, not himself, but his moustaches at the porte.

"Can I see the Chief of the Police?"

"If Monsieur will take the first door on the right, and ring." So Charlie took the first door on the right, and rang.

He was admitted into a large room, the chief furniture of which was a few chairs, a round table, a side table covered with papers, a stove, a bird-cage, and plenty of sand. The walls were covered with *affiches* in various languages, otherwise they were quite white. I never saw a place with so little disguise. It looked like a downward step to be in there at all ; and when between a couple of *gensd'armes* it was as near a relation to solitary confinement as can well be conceived. To be petting a kitten in such a place, and smoking a pipe, seemed the grossest violation of the rules of social propriety. Yet when Charlie answered to the summons, "*Hier ein !*" such was the employment of the man that received him. Over what would have been the fire-place in England were some strong fetters.

"I believe I address the Chief of the Police ?"

"Is there anything we can do for you ?" He neither answered the question nor deserted his cat, but he rose politely, and offered his visitor a chair.

"I have a servant." Here the chief laid down his pipe.

"The name and address of Monsieur ?" said the man, politely. He was tall, florid, stout ; with straight, hard features, but good-looking.

"Thornhill, of Meyerheim's house ; and Numero 361, Zeil."

"Good ; we know all about Monsieur."

Some men might have been flattered, Charlie was not.

"Circumstances render it desirable that a close watch should be kept on my servant."

"His name and country ?"

"Daly, I am told ; Ireland."

"Monsieur is cautious. Has he been guilty of anything whilst with Mr. Thornhill ?"

"Nothing whatever ; and is an excellent servant. Still there are reasons."

"We understand, Monsieur," said the Chief of the Police. "He will not escape. You are sure his name is Daly, and his country Ireland ?"

"Of the first, no ; of the second, decidedly—yes."

The chief then took up from the table a paper, letting fall gently his cat upon the ground, stroking her at the same time, and calling her poor little pussy, as though loth to part with her. He read aloud : "'Five feet eight ; flat face, very slightly marked with small-pox ; whiskers lately shaven ; strongly built, but not large ; consigned as groom to Mr. Thornhill ; character,

good ; antecedents, suspicious ; answers to the name of Daly—supposed to be fictitious.’ There, sir, is that the man ?” said the chief, looking up from his papers. “Not much chance of escape, there, I think. ‘He has a scar on one thumb, and has lost his two eye-teeth and one molar ; age, about forty.’ I fancy that’s your man, sir. He’s one of the best servants in the town. ‘Strict surveillance,’ I have added to his name. Will that suffice ?”

“Amplly. I wish you good morning, Herr Diebnehmer, and am much obliged by your kindness.”

And Charlie heard him say, as he turned to go out, “Poor little pussy, come den, come. Biedermann, has that fellow had his breakfast yet in cell 36 ?”

“No, sir.”

“Then stop it. He wants a change of diet, or we shall have him kicking. I’ll manage the municipality. Another flogging will do him no harm.”

“And this is your kitten-fancier,” thought Charlie ; “and the canary bird. I wonder Herr Diebnehmer is not suffocated by the mask he wears.”

There was a neat-looking horse in Frankfort, with a bad character, which, I am obliged to confess, he deserved. At least, so said half the *manège* riders in the city, and all the horse-breakers and regimental riding-masters, most of whom he had managed to place on their backs, either in the barrack school or at exercise. He was a pretty, well-bred Hungarian horse, not very deficient in power, and of most undeniable pluck. He was not vicious, but playful ; and it seemed only a question of how long you could hope to sit on his back. If he got tired before you, you had mastered him for the day ; if not, you would have to return home with or without him, as the case might be. It is but right to say that, having succeeded many times in his efforts, he had become emboldened ; and this made the mastery of him difficult of attainment. It is not surprising that he was to be sold cheap ; the more so, as the young Baron von Sturmfels had been deliberately kicked off twice at the head of his company. This was not to be borne ; for if the Fraulein von Berlichingen once saw so melancholy a debasement of her soul’s idol, the chances are she would have turned to worship her second deity, the Count von Rükenbachen, and placed him upon the pedestal now occupied by his rival, Von Sturmfels. This horse Charlie Thornhill set his heart upon ; and he was not many hours in Charlie’s hands before he was ambling about the

streets of Frankfort, with apparently as much good-humour as if he had never had his own way at all. It was a fine sight to the lovers of good horsemanship to see the two pacing gently along the Zeil, the young Englishman sitting closely down in his saddle without effort, and giving a sufficiency of liberty to his head to enable him to play with his bit, and turn from side to side, instead of that alternate urging and curbing which had made him the plunging, Astley-like performer that he had been.

Some little time after he had reclaimed this beast, he had given Hartzstein a mount upon him. Owing, probably, to the fact of his change of masters, he took to his old tricks. The baron resorted to his old form, spurs, and the curb, and though by no means deficient in pluck or experience, he was pitched off in the kennel, exactly opposite Herr Meyerheim's, and in a state of insensibility, was taken in there. In one week, with the exception of his collar-bone, he was again well ; but whether it was that a degree of sympathy was excited for him which did not exist before, or the natural goodness of a woman's disposition, which disposes her to love everything which she can protect, it is certain that Hartzstein made much progress in the heart of Kathleen. That she was flattered by his attentions it is but natural to suppose ; and day by day, as he prolonged his stay on some frivolous pretext, she became more in love. As to Hartzstein himself, his passion gained strength hourly ; and he vowed to himself the possession of a girl whom he could not regard as fitted for the wife of a Viennese noble, even in his own unpretending position. His conversation with Burke we have seen. The reader can easily guess to whom their villanous designs referred.

To say that the death of Henry Thornhill affected Charlie very seriously would not be true. With the contents of his letter, and his solicitor's explanations, he was satisfied, but he failed to understand entirely his uncle's position. He had been his favourite nephew, he knew, but he had not been intimate with him, nor had his house ever afforded him a home. Under these circumstances he got over the loss pretty quickly, but was obliged, on the day of Comte Degenfeld's dinner, to absent himself altogether. We shall see to what important results it led. There was no other absentee, and Teddy Dacre found himself side by side with the count, and on the other side the Barons Hartzstein and De Weiler, in a private room of the Hôtel de Russie.

CHAPTER XLIV

FRUSTRATED.

A NICE little dinner is a charming invention of the enemy of mankind to dispel serious thought, and to deaden apprehension. A large heavy turban-and-feather business is quite another matter. One goes through that as a solemn duty, and expects to be rewarded for self-denial. About such a thing as that there should be nothing light but the pastry, and everything dry as the champagne. Eighteen people, not one of whom has been asked to the table without a motive.

"You must have Lord Alfred, dear, on Tuesday week."

"Why so, love? He is terribly stupid, and as deaf as a post."

"Because he owns three parishes in the southern division; and if your brother is to be returned again, you mustn't forget him."

"And what am I to do about Sir Henry? There's no room for him."

"Gad! you must put on another leaf, and ask old Mrs. Perrywinkle to meet him. They're old friends; and his covers will be shot the beginning of next month, and it won't do for him to forget us."

"Do you care about my asking Adelaide instead of Mrs. Perrywinkle?"

"Oh! I can't stand Adelaide Tempest: by Jove, she's worse than old Lord Alfred: she talks as much, and, what's worse, you can hear every word she says."

"Well, then, all I've to say, dear, is this: you won't get your gardener's son into the Omnilogical School at Dunderhead, for Adelaide can do just as she pleases there." Then ensues, not a quarrel, but a matrimonial difference of opinion, in which both fight, and give way, and Adelaide and Mrs. Perrywinkle are both asked, and the dinner becomes more oppressively stupid than ever.

If, on the other hand, the people are charming, and the dinner large and good, it is quite impossible to enjoy either the one or the other. Depend upon it, that whilst the palate discriminates between the material delicacies of the cuisine, neither the tongue nor the ear is capable of uttering or imbibing the refinements of

a truly enlightened wit. In a moderate degree the one promotes the other. A nice little dinner is perfectly compatible with the appreciation of refreshing converse. Attic salt is a wonderful appetizer in such a case. A pleasurable sensation is produced peculiarly congenial to *spirituelle* conversation. There being no great physical strain, a little mental tension is permissible ; but when both influences are at work together, it reminds us of the tides. The sun and the moon, operating on opposite sides of our planet, produce nearly an equilibrium, or an accidental difference ; whilst the efforts of the two combined produce an effect which is always in excess of the *juste milieu*.

I therefore like a little dinner. It is but fair, however, to admit that ideas of a little dinner differ as much as anything in this world can differ. One man means an atrociously bad beef-steak, and a still worse pudding ; another, half a dozen badly-cooked dishes, including cold, thick soup, soft fish, and a dingy table-cloth ; a third delights to satisfy the cravings of his friends with a roast fowl and a boiled leg of mutton, what he calls a nice head of "sallery," and a glass of newly-concocted port. A sucking-pig, a green goose, and a Welsh sheep are all excuses, at one time or another, for a little dinner. Without myself presuming to dictate, of one thing you may be certain—that, in my view of the case, no gentleman marrying upon three hundred a year can venture upon giving little dinners.

But these little dinners are a national facility. They require a minute attention to detail, which Englishmen expend on what they call higher objects, as if any object could be higher than one's daily bread ; as if one's digestion did not depend on one's dinner, one's temper on one's digestion, and one's aspirations in this world on one's temper. As a nation we are not, therefore, a good light-dinner-giving people. The heavy and pompous we do to a turn : it is characteristic of our maritime, political, and commercial greatness. Commend me rather to the French. They study a dinner, and they give you such an one as shall help, rather than retard, the graces of conversation. The Germans are utterly out of court. Their vegetable diet, green pickles, stewed pears, roast veal and prunes are calculated to improve the conjectural readings of Sophocles, or to quarrel over disputed passages of the Annals of Tacitus, but they are not meant to promote wit in themselves, or a healthy appreciation of it in others. As a dinner, therefore, with the whole power of the cuisine of the Hôtel de Russie, Charlie Thornhill lost nothing

by his absence from the table of the Lieutenant Comte von Degenfeld.

"Have you seen Dornhill's new horse, De Weiler?" asked their host, producing some cigars, and tendering them to his guests.

"Not yet; but he is said to be dangerous. Is he the horse that hurt you, Hartzstein?" said De Weiler. Hartzstein blushed as he acknowledged the mischance. De Weiler was not remarkable for tact.

"He is a dangerous horse said," said Hartzstein, "or rather was when I rode him; but he is become quiet with Charles Thornhill."

"Thornhill? Charlie Thornhill?" repeated Dacre. "Ah! I remember now. Charlie is in Frankfort. I quite forgot. He is banking here. I've been away from England, and not heard directly from him lately. Is he here now?"

"Certainly," said Hartzstein. "I saw him yesterday. He was to have dined here to-day with Degenfeld. By the way, I spent a few days at your father's, Mr. Dacre, with his brother Tom, the last time I was in England."

"So I heard," said Dacre. "They say Tom Thornhill is nearly done. He's a fine fellow; but I know Charlie best. He saved my life at school, and my sister's the season before last, out hunting."

"I have been told so; but I never heard the particulars."

Teddy related them, and concluded by saying, "Talking of his riding, you never saw such a place as he jumped at the corner of our cover. However, he was always considered one of the best men in the midland counties. What's the horse he has now?"

"Oh! an incorrigible brute, an entire Hungarian, who has half killed half the men in the regiment. But Thornhill has quieted him. He came back to Frankfort, and bought him on purpose to practise some trick he learnt of your American Rarey. What did you think of him, Dacre?" said Hartzstein.

"I liked him very much. He's a very clever fellow with horses."

"Said to be rather a charlatan, wasn't he?" inquired Degenfeld.

"You know," added De Weiler, "that something like his method has been practised here, and in almost all cavalry schools, for years past,"

"The same *method*," replied Dacre, who was unwittingly led into the defence, "but not the same principle."

"I don't understand the distinction exactly," said one of the three.

"Let me endeavour to explain, then. It was customary, occasionally, to put horses down in our own country, but no reason was given for doing so, nor was it supposed to be part of an organised system. Rarey's is. That's a very fine glass of hock that M. Sarg has given us."

"Yes," said Degenfeld; "the house is famous for it. And what is the principle involved in Rarey's practice?"

"Complete subjugation without active violence, succeeded by kindness."

"Is the horse capable of comprehending that? Women are not. They don't forget the process of subjugation," said Hartzstein.

"You speak as if you had had considerable practice, Hartzstein; however, horses are naturally good, entirely good: women, like ourselves, have a leaven of malice and wickedness, and don't always forget the struggle, whatever may be the struggle, whatever may be the result. Beware of a first quarrel!"

"But the horse fights, like the woman," said the baron.

"Yes; but from fear, not from vice. A young horse is mischievous from ignorance; but whatever vices he has have been contracted from bad management. I think Rarey's system would answer with children, though they seldom feel confidence where there has been much or continued strictness."

"And was Rarey usually successful?" asked Degenfeld.

"Invariably," said Teddy Dacre, "and with very bad horses."

"They became restive again, though," said Hartzstein, "when the restraint was removed: women all over."

"Now and then. And remember that in those cases the habits of vice were confirmed; and he had no fair chance of frequent repetition. The management of women is like the biting, rather, of horses. Every horse can be ridden if you get the right tackle on him, and woman only wants the right man for her lord and master."

"I wonder whether your friend Thornhill is as clever with the one as the other," said Hartzstein.

"I should think he gives himself very little concern about the latter; but he's just the sort of person to obtain a very

strong influence. He has all the qualities women most admire, and the strongest will I ever knew."

"And what are they?" inquired De Weiler.

"Great firmness, manliness, self-respect, and chivalrous notions of their rights, with an utter absence of any vanity. He has a heart and arm of iron, with a silken hand."

"He's keeping them in practice with a very pretty Irish woman at present," said De Weiler. "I saw them together yesterday with Meyerheim's children."

"Who is she?" said Dacre, to whom Frankfort scandal was new.

"She is the governess at the house of his chief, with whom he formerly lived. She is said to be a woman of family, whose parents are needy, and who have left England from necessity." Degenfeld repeated only what he had heard, which was not far from the truth for a report.

"Then she is safe from Charlie Thornhill, I lay my life," said Dacre.

"Why so?" asked Hartzstein, abruptly.

"Because he's a gentleman," rejoined Teddy, who had very pretty notions on the subject for an *attaché*, and whose theory was excellent, whatever might have been his practice. "He's more likely to protect her than to take advantage of a very helpless situation."

"You seem to have studied his character," said Hartzstein, rather insolently.

"I have," replied Dacre, not noticing the tone of the speaker, "and he is one of my most intimate friends. I know no one whom I should less desire for an enemy."

"Why so, again?" demanded Hartzstein.

"Because, though slow to move, he is perseverance itself; and though not a man of quick apprehension, he is singularly tenacious of an idea when once it has taken root. What is the name of the lady?"

"I forget," said Degenfeld. "Hartzstein can tell you; he's rather *épris* himself."

"She calls herself Kathleen Donald," said Hartzstein, thus appealed to. "The report goes that her father left England for some betting transactions years ago; and that that is not his true name. The Meyerheims knew nothing of him, but they describe the girl's mother as a lady. Of one thing you may be quite certain, that Thornhill is paying her very marked atten-

tion ; and from your account we must accredit him with the very best intentions. Now, Degenfeld, you'll excuse me, but I'm going to dress for the ball."

The little dinner was finished with a cup of coffee and a cigar, and the guests separated, each on his own business or pleasure, as the case might be.

Hartzstein went to the ball, as did Degenfeld and De Weiler. The scene was gay and glittering as foreign ball-rooms are wont to be ; and the supper a miserable failure to English notions. There was a general lack of beauty ; but such as the free city and its neighbourhood afforded was there. The Meyerheims were there. Hartzstein paid his sweetest compliments to the banker's wife ; but he saw no Kathleen Donald, as indeed he presumed would be the case, and Charlie Thornhill had not arrived. "But Englishmen are always late," said he to himself, "or what can have become of him ?"

We will not stay to analyse the sincerity of the smiles, or the truthfulness of some hearts there that beat beneath white satin and diamonds. A ball-room is a well-gilt mausoleum, and for every one heart made happy, there may be more than one made sorrowful. However, youth spreads its feathers to the golden sunshine, and they soon right themselves again, glittering not the less brightly that they have been watered by the tears of disappointment. Like plants, the judicious admixture of water and sunshine has strengthened them to put forth their flowers, and they grow the stronger and more enduring blossoms for an early check. Sometimes it comes off less happily. Either the check is too violent, or the remedy is not at hand ; then the plant dies. But it is only one here and there, and the place is soon covered by a ranker grower, and no one misses the rarest flower of them all.

About the time that Degenfeld and his friends sat down to dinner, Charlie Thornhill had ordered his horses. They were short of work, and he desired his servant Daly to ride the Arab, he himself mounting the vicious Hungarian. They rode slowly out of the town, and being indifferent as to the route, he turned towards the left bank of the Lahn, on the rode to Wetzlar. Charlie was not given to blue devils, but he had some reflections just now not the most cheerful in the world. The mystery connected with his uncle's will, and his ignorance of his affairs, affected him more than he chose to acknowledge. Brought up with the expectation of benefiting by his uncle's death,

whenever it might happen, to a very considerable extent this utter frustration of his hopes made him seriously consider his position. It was not for himself alone. He had been accustomed for the last few months to think of his future prospects in connection with Edith Dacre. His sense of honesty did not permit him to indulge the same happy reveries now, and he was only wondering what ought to be his course of action with regard to her and her family. That dinner of Degenfeld's was unlucky ; had he only seen Edward Dacre, it might have been easily settled. But Thornhill, if he liked talking on such a subject little, liked writing less ; and that, added to his natural shyness, made him trust to accident for a proper explanation of the affair. Of Edith herself he had no misgivings ; but whether she ought to be asked to share the moderate income of the foreign correspondent of Messrs. Chalkstone and Co. was another affair.

I am reluctantly obliged to admit that as Charlie rode along he took no notice of the magnificent view which broke upon him to the west. The sun was sinking ; and there stretched the chain of hills called the Berg Strasse, with Mayence in the middle distance, and the beautiful slopes of Wiesbaden. Magnificent prospect ! and redolent of German chivalry and Ritterthum. If the view had been ten times as beautiful, Charlie would have disregarded it. Unfortunately he cared nothing whatever about scenery ; and had the reminiscences of chivalry been ten times as apparent, he would have regarded them, as far as his limited knowledge went, as intolerable humbug, or practical robbery. He was himself eminently chivalrous, if honesty and the defence of the wronged formed a material part of the creed ; but of the poetry of romance he had nothing, and cared less ; and as, for every woman these knightly spirits relieved, he firmly believed they carried off two to their own strongholds, he may be excused for his dubious admiration of the Middle Ages.

The time of year, as I have already implied, if not said, was middle autumn. A beautiful day was about to be succeeded by heavy banks of clouds in the south-west, which came up, lowering, with the wind. The sun was darkened, and the moon, which was near its full, was hiding her light. In the distance lightning began to play, and gradually the landscape had a turbid look, inky, streaked with sullen red. Charles Thornhill's horse had been a little troublesome, but he had sobered down again :

and as he heard the distant rumbling of the thunder, he began again to fidget and lash his sides with the quantity of tail that English taste had left him. By-the-way, the spoliation thickened his quarters, and gave him a home look, which, independently of taste, was valuable to Charlie. He was some distance from Frankfort when the storm began ; somewhere in a region unknown to English travellers of these railway days, but hallowed by the "Sorrows of Werter." Charlie knew nothing of that. It was not in his way, and, I confess, is dry enough to stagger a better man.

"Daly, do you know of a public anywhere before we get back to Wetzlar?" It is an ominous name, but as the place really exists, I am exonerated of the pun. Daly rode up along side of his master.

"Sorrow a public I know along here, sir. We passed one half an hour ago, coming out of the town, on the right-hand side ; but it looked like a poor place, yer honour." And Daly saluted his master respectfully.

"Poor or rich, it's better than nothing ; and I rather think we shall upset Kosciusko's temper if we get into the storm." Just then came a terrific clap of thunder, which certainly irritated the horse, whilst the lightning which preceded it made him start as if he were shot. Mr. Rarey's system had not yet taken into its consideration a thunderstorm. Charlie played with Kosciusko's mouth, and after some handling, induced him to settle. They then proceeded at a good trot, the Arab cantering after them towards the roadside public-house, the lightning and thunder continuing to roar behind them, and the rain evidently coming up in gusts from behind.

After ten minutes' sharp riding, and just as the floods descended, they pulled up at the little roadside inn on the route to Wetzlar. It was a mysterious-looking place : not the resort of good company, however numerically strong. The windows were broken in places, the *porte-cochère* was old and worn. The front of the house was guiltless of paint, and not a soul seemed to be stirring. On their arrival Charlie jumped from his horse, and threw the reins to Daly, at the same time calling loudly for "the house." A fine big, good-humoured-looking fellow came to the door, pipe in hand, clothed in a blouse, and with a species of foraging-cap on his head. He wore a light moustache, and a pointed beard, uncommon in those parts : he had an indifferent air, but the sight of Charlie's groom and horses roused him into

attention, and he welcomed Thornhill in a good-humoured manner. Charlie rather liked him ; though devoid of anything like obsequiousness, he was civil enough, and ordered Fritz to go show the gentleman's groom his stable. He remarked on the badness of the evening, and the loneliness of the road ; railways spoilt his trade ; and Charlie ordered a bottle of wine, which the landlord had recommended, and Daly was accommodated in the kitchen. Charlie lit a cigar ; and by this time the storm stood over the village, and spent its fury on the road beneath. Both master and man were glad to be indoors.

In the course of half an hour it began to abate, and Charlie went out to the stable-yard to see about resuming his journey. His servant had already commenced tightening the girths, and getting ready the manes and tails of his horses, which required a little straightening after the buffeting of the wind, when the noise of wheels was heard, and there dashed into the yard a carriage and pair of horses, which pulled up suddenly at the *portecochère*. Charlie, impelled by some unusual curiosity, returned towards the house in time to see the door of the calèche opened and the steps let down, while from it descended a strongly-built, powerful man, with red whiskers and beard, lifting rather than leading a girl, more dead than alive, as white as marble, and down whose cheeks the tears rolled rapidly. I have said that it was become dark ; the house was scarcely lighted, yet, as she passed beneath a lamp in the passage, near the door, Charlie was enabled to see a part of a face which he thought he could scarcely have mistaken. Still, how and why here under these circumstances ? Could it be she ? And what was it to him ? What was it to any man situated as he was ? Was he the investigator of adventures to the forlorn damsels of Frankfort ? Suppose, too, he should have made a mistake !!!

"Sir, bedad here's the bay horse, looking all the worse for his gallop."

"What the deuce do you mean ?" said Charlie, abstractedly.

"I mane that the bay horse is here, sir—the one you sold to Baron Hartzstein ; and he isn't improved by the leather."

"Are you sure it's the horse ? Here, landlord."

"Sir. Excuse me, but you're an Englishman," said the landlord.

"I am. But ——"

"There's a lady of your country upstairs has just arrived.

She's in great distress. Is there anything wrong? Because, if so ———"

"Listen to me, landlord. You know nothing of this?"

"Nothing upon my honour," said the landlord.

"Nor the name of the man?"

"No."

"Nor the name of the lady?"

"Certainly not."

"How many are there with her?" asked Charlie.

"Two; the master, and his servant, who drove them; both armed."

"How?" said Charlie.

"Pistols," replied Boniface.

"It looks bad. If I can convince you it is as you suspect will you help me?"

"I will," said the man,

"Have you any fire-arms—a pistol, for instance?"

"One, at your service."

"Have you a boy that can ride to Wetzlar for the gend'armes?"

"Yes, but no horse."

"The Arab is as quiet as a child. Daly, stand by the door of the room we shall show you, without breathing; the landlord will be ready to help: but let us have no scandal, if we can help it. Give me that hunting-crop you have in your hand. Now, landlord, take my card to the lady, who speaks German as well as we do, and ask her to see me."

The landlord ascended the stairs, and Charlie followed. The landlord entered, and closed the door. A smothered conversation ensued, of which, however, Charlie heard but stifled sobs, and a coarse, broad accent, which said, "You know your promise, and you know mine. Your father's life, as well as your own, depends upon it. No, landlord," added he, "the lady cannot see the gentleman." As the landlord opened the door to retreat, Charlie Thornhill, however, stood before them.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" But, before he could answer, the girl, Kathleen Donald—for it was she—threw herself between them, and seizing Charlie's hand, entreated protection in moving terms. "Save me! Save me, Mr. Thornhill! Thank God, I have a friend! I have been deceived into the belief that my father was in danger; that he had sent for me: that I could save him; and, knowing how he needed it, I trusted myself to this villain, who has disclosed himself as the agent of

another. Is it possible that he, too, could mean me this wrong?"

"Who and what are you, sir, that you have dared to entrap an English girl into these meshes? Are you so low as to be pander to the Baron Hartzstein?" And Charlie approached nearer to his opponent, whilst he supported Kathleen with his other arm.

"You seem to know something of this business—more than you should know; but by what right do you interfere with the journey of this lady and myself?"

"Nonsense, sir. You hear what she says. Relinquish your claim, and go hence in peace. Avoid further scandal, or it may be worse for you."

"Sit down, then, young lady, or it may chance that I put my threat in execution." The man then drew deliberately a pistol from his breast, and looked at Charlie. "Leave the room, sir. And, faith, be glad ye leave it alive. You have interfered in a most unjustifiable manner in what does not concern anyone but this young lady and me. Be advised, and interfere no further."

"In a matter, sir, that concerns every honest man. I know this lady, and her relations with Baron Hartzstein. She claims my protection, and she shall have it. Put up your weapon, and listen to me. The landlord is aware of your business, and has been secured; already the police have been sent for, to be used if necessary. My servant waits without; and your own, whom I see there, is already well known, and can be identified in Frankfort. Daly!" The groom entered the room, and Charlie Thornhill continued: "Order the horses to be put into the calèche that drove in here half an hour ago: leave the Arab here with the landlord, and attend us on Kosciusko. I hear your servant, sir, is armed; weapons are useless, as he is to drive us back to Frankfort. He will therefore surrender his pistol. Your master will be better pleased that this business should be hushed at once."

I know that this situation is highly dramatic. Scarcely an author of any degree would resist the temptation of a combat, or a murder, or an escape by the window. Most would endeavour to add to the mystery of the evening's entertainment by a bandit landlord, or the sudden appearance of Hartzstein himself. These are very vulgar expedients, and most improbable ones. The reader has already discovered, perhaps, what we shall tell him. The gentleman concerned knew too well what he was about. His reward might be secured by prudence; it could only be

risked at great disadvantage by bravado or resistance. He also understood that three honest men and a hostile woman are more than a match for two rascals, though one of them was a bold villain enough. Charlie's terms were therefore complied with at once ; and the betrayer threw himself into a chair with a dogged air, whilst the more humble ruffian placed his undischarged pistol on the table. "Right," said our hero. "Now go and help the landlord with the horses. When they are ready, we are. What are you staring at, Daly?"

"B-u-r-ke!" found its way slowly from between his lips.

"Yes, it is Burke ; and I'm not the first man who has been cajoled by a woman. Faith, I give ye joy of your conquest, sir."

The landlord announced the horses ; and Charlie, offering his arm to Kathleen, followed by his servant, proceeded slowly down stairs. The carriage was at the door ; the night was again fine, and cooler than before. Daly mounted Kosciusko, and Hartzstein's servant the box ; and thus they drove leisurely towards Frankfort.

Arrived in that city, Charlie took his charge at once to her father's house, where they were received without emotion ; Mr. and Mrs. Donald imagining only that their daughter was still with Madame Meyerheim. This rendered explanation more difficult than ever. So Charlie, after essaying in vain to render the business intelligible, and not himself quite certain how far Kathleen had acted with imprudence, was at length obliged to give up all attempts at explanation, and to leave the girl to satisfy her father after his departure.

The facts elicited speak for themselves. Kathleen had received a letter from one Burke, hinting darkly at calamity impending over her father. The name of Burke, not unknown to her, gave sufficient force to the warning. It prayed a meeting on the evening in question, at a late hour, though not yet in darkness, to suggest remedies, in the hands of the girl herself, for some unknown ills. So far she was easily deceived, and went without misgiving. A pretended letter from her father was given her in the twilight. Burke was a practised forger, and she was deceived. Once in Hartzstein's carriage, she was not aroused to the real danger of her situation till she was out of Frankfort and all reach of succour. The reader knows the rest. Her accidental meeting with Charlie, and his recognition of Hartzstein's horse saved her from danger ; and the influence which Charlie's inviolable kindness had wrought for her exerted itself in the happiest

moment. Hartzstein was merciless, and, away from other influences, he might have added her to his other victims. Charlie Thornhill had had forty winks in the matter of Kathleen, and his ride woke him.

CHAPTER XLV.

CONFESSIONS, LITERARY AND DOMESTIC.

“Und warest du auch noch so klug, so sei doch bescheiden.”

Germ. Prov.

THE escapade related in our last chapter had not been so quietly managed but that it had given some cause for scandal. Little, however, of the real truth was known; and perhaps the most prevalent report was the intended elopement of an English governess with a young English banker, now resident in Frankfurt; but that they had been caught and brought back by the girl's father. At all events, this version found its way to England; and, some time later, Charlie Thornhill was half-annoyed and half-amused by the necessity of enlightening Lady Marston, which he did: not, however, quite in time to save his own reputation. A little bit of gossip is a bait at which everybody rises. If it affects the character of one, it is something; and, with a sort of recompensatory charity, a good dab of black paint is supposed to make the other parts look whiter. It redeems the whole man from natural insipidity. If with the one stone, as in the present case, you can kill two birds, by all means have a shy at them. If it does no other good, it will at least make them more cautious for the future. Or, is it that the world, in its honesty, paints man as he would be if he were found out? Probably, after all, what we call detraction is an inherent love of truth; and, knowing what we are ourselves, we feel satisfied that our neighbours are not unlike us. The difference, after all, is in form; the colouring is much the same all the world over.

Like all Germans, or young men living in Germany, Charlie had no cook of his own at his rooms; he had *abonné* himself at the table d'hôte of the Hôtel de Russie. It had many advantages, not the least of which was the occasional meeting of an

old friend, and the hearing of some English news, in which he was interested. At the present season such things happened daily. Whole families, seeking health, education, or economy : single men, new scenes, or repose from old ones : women, blue stockings, ready to rush into print, or adventuresses into matrimony ; and both seeking a foreign subject for the exercise of their powers. And Charlie liked to look at them all. Men who think much talk little : men who think deeply, in their lighter moments talk much. It is a relief to them. Charlie never talked, but he was always observing. His thoughts were many and varied, but ever on the surface. Still, as he was occupied, it was a bore to him to talk on ordinary occasions.

To-day he took his seat, as according to custom, near the top of the table. A Russian general officer, who spoke four languages and drank oceans of champagne, occupied the post of honour at the head. There were the *habitués* of the place, like Charlie, and many English. All the girls were more or less good-looking, and excited attention as they entered. Their brothers, emerging from the chrysalis state of Oxford or Cambridge, a regimental mess, the Guards' Club-house, or the Marine Parade, were insipid, straight-nosed, and gentlemanly. There was one exception to this rule, and he was placed next to Charlie. Our friend was attracted first by the perseverance with which the stranger poured, not into his ear, but all over the dinner-table, floods of sporting intelligence.

"Know him, Gad ! I should think I do ; he knows how to run a bye as well as most men," said he to a bald-headed old gentleman, who had been imprudent enough to mention the name of an English nobleman. "There's not a leg that wouldn't have been broke if he'd won the Derby last year." Here the wife of the bald-headed man dropped her knife and fork, and gazed with silent horror at the speaker. The gentleman, however, feeling called upon to say something, replied—"God bless my soul, you don't say so ?"

"Oh ! but I do. What a pot it was ; he'd have boiled 'em all." Here the company looked up in general, whilst one or two of the younger members sharpened their ears, to see if anything was to be learnt from so distinguished a professor of turf slang. "Here, Kellner," added he, handling a bottle of Rhine wine, which he had ordered at the instigation of the waiter himself ; "there, that won't do at all, it's infernally nasty : now, what is really good ?"

"We think our Hockheimer a superior wine, sir; or if you would try the Johannisberg—"

"By all means, a bottle of Johannisberg, and mind it *is* good."

Charlie ventured to look at the speaker, as soon as he got his Johannisberg. He found him a stout, short, pasty-faced, unintellectual-looking man, with red hair and whiskers, and an imperial, which he stroked very satisfactorily to himself, and with an air of superiority over the rest of the company. He had large hands, without energy in them; and a hurried manner of eating, as though he was not accustomed to much time for his dinner. He was, in other respects, a vulgar person: and yet his face seemed familiar to Charlie, as he looked at him. He talked of everybody of note, always speaking of titled people without their titles. "Carabbas, the best fellow alive, mounted me with the Heythrop last winter. The Duke—know him? egad! what a coachman he is." Here he addressed himself directly to his neighbour.

"Do you know Beaufort!"

"I haven't the pleasure," replied Charlie, and he manifestly fell in the estimation of his new acquaintance.

Here many of the diners rose to leave the room, seeing that, unless they put an end to the dinner, the dinner would certainly put an end to them. Charlie took out a cigar; the stranger did the same, and proceeded to qualify the bottle of Johannisberg with tobacco.

"You know that part of the country?" again said the man, with American perseverance.

"I have hunted there occasionally, two or three seasons ago. You seem to be well acquainted with it."

"Indeed I am: charming neighbourhood, and beautiful places all over the country. Now, to my mind, Gilsland: but perhaps you don't know Dacre?"

"Slightly."

"Ah! capital fellow, when you know him intimately. Of course you know Robinson Brown is engaged to be married to one of the girls?"

"Who the devil can this fellow be?" thought Charlie.

"Nothing but his racing propensities, and the dollop he dropped to Thornhill on the match, they say, postponed it. Dacre wouldn't have it at any price. That's the *on dit*; between ourselves, I know better."

"Oh!" said Charlie, with considerable astonishment; and it was all he could say.

"The fact is, the match was a sell: there's no doubt the mare could have won. Of course it wouldn't do to say that; but I wrote a devil of a leader the next week in the 'Evening Gammoner,' which, of course you saw."

"I beg your pardon——"

"Not at all: very likely you didn't see it; but it was the talk of London for the following week. I gave it them most tremendously about the light-weight handicaps, and the present system of roping."

"And did you see the match yourself?" said Charlie, innocently.

"See it; bless you, no! not I. I just went down to the club, and picked up what I could about it. I really know no more about it than you, except by hearsay. But, you may take your oath what I say is true."

"Undoubtedly," rejoined the other; "and—and—do you write much on these subjects?"

"Yes, every week; almost daily. I'm quite knocked up, really in wretched health; but it's a great thing to lead public opinion. I'm '*The Sphinx*.'"

"Really," said Charlie again, who hardly testified the surprise at the great man's proximity which might have been expected, but which probably arose from his never reading at all.

"Yes, *The Sphinx of the 'Evening Gammoner.'*"

"The Sphinx! That's all about *Œdipus*, I remember, thanks to Gresham."

"Yes, I'm *Œdipus* in the 'Cockfighter's Chronicle.'"

"What's the use of that?"

"Well, between ourselves, we are able to give one another a lift: and, as we are both prophets, we get four horses instead of two: and when Sphinx is wrong it's hard if *Œdipus* isn't right."

"That's a good idea," said Charlie, impressed more strongly with the wit than the honesty of the proceeding: "I never thought of that."

"I dare say not. It don't much matter what a fellow writes, as long as he makes it strong enough. The worst of it is that the 'Chronicle' is a tremendous paper for light weights, short distances, and two-year-old races; and the 'Gammoner' goes in for the breed of horses, the Beacon Course, eleven stone, and all that sort of thing. Kellner, give me another cigar."

"Well, but what do you think about it? Because it seems to me that the 'Gammoner' is right. Racing doesn't do much for the breed of horses, except in quantity," and Charlie was so amused with his companion that he took out a second cigar, and offered one to the Sphinx.

"You see, I know nothing about the merits of the thing; and it can make no difference to me. All I have to do is to keep my ears open; and, unless it's a very bad case, I go for the nobbs."

"And what line do the nobbs take?" asked simple-minded Charlie.

"They're always honest enough when they haven't a good thing on themselves; and they're boys to halloo when other people are throwing stones. But the truth is, they've done so much in the dairy of late years, that there's no more milk to be had for love or money; and, I think, I know a gentleman or two that daren't look a calf in the face again." Here the Sphinx took a silent pull at his cigar, rolled it round with his finger, and looked inquiringly up at his interrogator. He began to think he had been undergoing the milking process himself, only in a different form.

"Might I ask if you are resident in Frankfort, as you seemed to speak German exceedingly well at dinner?" said *Œdipus*.

"I am residing in Frankfort, but dine at the table d'hôte daily."

"You're a bit of a sportsman too, I perceive."

"I was when in England: here we have no opportunity."

"I'm going for a little tour, and then to Baden. They rather expect the races to be something out of the common; as to Benezet, the man's a prince."

"Baden! races at Baden! so there are. I shall be able to get away about that time," said Charlie, rising; "and then, I trust, we shall meet again: at present I must wish you good morning, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Smith, my name's Smith; but everybody knows me."

"And mine Thornhill. I'm a brother of the Thornhill you mentioned some time ago." Smith turned blue: "Good God, what a fool I am!" said he, as Charlie walked quietly down the steps of the *salle à manger*; "that's the very fellow that rode the race: I thought I'd seen him before."

"What a pretty blackguard that is to direct public opinion, as he calls it," said Charlie to himself. "I thought I'd seen him before."

A few days after this, it occurred to Charlie that he ought to inquire after Miss Donald. If he had not been rather conscious of liking her, he would have done so before. Since the evening he had returned with her to Frankfort she had not been at Madame Meyerheim's ; and her health was the natural plea for absence. Some curious rumours had reached the ears of that little woman ; but she had unbounded faith in Charlie, and refused to believe even the gossip of her most good-natured friends. This was unreasonable ; and she denied herself much pleasure, it is to be confessed, for the sake of the quondam inmate of her home. What is still more extraordinary, she dared to form her own opinion on the case of her children's governess, and had not yet sentenced that delinquent to unqualified dismissal.

"Now, Mr. Thornhill," said she, on the day in question, blushing a little, as being altogether too young and good-looking to put such a question, and yet owning, even to herself, a considerable advance on Charlie's time of life. "Now, Mr. Thornhill, *sehen sie mal*, will you tell me the truth about my governess, Miss Donald, whom I love almost like a daughter ?"

"What ! they've been talking about it then, have they ?" said Charlie, and his good-humoured face looked as coolly unconcerned as if he had been talking about American freedom, or any other nonentity to which the world had given a name.

"Of course they have : that's not very remarkable. But I want to hear the truth ; and perhaps I shan't get it if I listen to the women."

"Possibly not, madam ;" and, as Charlie was rather shy of his own voice, he blushed too, but he managed to tell his story, and to exonerate the girl entirely, which indeed, was not difficult to do.

"I'm glad to know the truth : poor girl !" and the good-natured lady dropped a tear on her black silk dress, which she carefully wiped off the next minute. "What a pretty story Baroness von Holtzapfel would make of this if she knew it : she's as jealous of Kathleen as can be, and in love with Hartzstein herself." Then Charlie took his hat, and his leave, and his way towards Römerberg, and the dark street behind the cathedral.

When he reached the house he was left to find his way to the door on the second étage by himself ; and here an inferior-looking servant, with nothing neat about her but her hair,

opened the outer door. Charlie found himself almost at once in the presence of Mrs. Kildonald and her husband. He was kindly received, but with evident restraint. "Miss Donald was not well ; her nerves had received a shock ; but in a few more days she would return to Madame Meyerheim, who was kindness itself, and had written the nicest note, giving her any length of absence necessary." Kildonald himself was evidently a great invalid. Charlie looked at his handsome, delicate features, which wore the marks of suffering and irritability : and he saw, with pain, his attenuated frame and hands, one of which seemed almost useless, as it lay passively along the arm of his invalid chair. He had a way too of stroking it with the other hand, whether from hope of alleviation or mere habit it were difficult to say. Kildonald had hitherto failed to recognise in Charlie the handsome stranger who had given him a helping arm on the night of his encounter with Burke. Charlie had suspected his protégé on the previous visit, though hurried, short, and by candlelight : now he was sure of him.

"Did you say 'Thornhill.' Norah—Mr. Thornhill?" asked he, and a curious shade, almost a spasm, as of a painful recollection, passed over the invalid's face.

"Yes, Arthur, Mr. Thornhill, of whom you have heard Kathleen speak so often, but to whom we scarcely expected to lie under such an obligation ! Ah ! sir, my husband's health is not what it was, or we should have thanked you more heartily, as poor Kathleen would have wished." Mrs. Kildonald rose hastily to conceal her tears, and left the room. There was a dreadful sense of oppression on Charlie's mind. The circumstances of the case came painfully upon him ; but, more than all, an appearance of poverty and suffering, which seemed to be unusual, and unfitted to the aristocratic manner of Kildonald and the beauty of his wife. The room was bare of furniture, more even than is usual in the larger cities of Germany. A few books on a side table and a piano constituted its whole ornamental arrangement ; and an empty stove, in lieu of a cheerful English fireplace, is not calculated to give an impression of cheerfulness where other adjuncts are wanting. So Charlie sat for a moment, bearing the somewhat inquisitorial glance of his host.

"Thornhill—Thornhill ; yes, certainly like, but not strikingly so. But——. You're Mr. Thornhill of Thornhills ? Forgive my abruptness ; but there are circumstances connected with

that name which attract me irresistibly, and—and—I'm sure you'll forgive me." Kildonald spoke with some hesitation of manner, as though anxious to say something, and yet not knowing how to begin.

"My brother is Mr. Thornhill of Thornhills."

"You must have been young; very. Excuse me; but you may recollect, you must have heard something in connection with—with—the melancholy circumstances of the late Mr. Thornhill's death?" Here Kildonald turned away his head, and the colour mounted to his temples.

"Everything, I believe," said Charlie, who thought this the safest termination to what might be a disagreeable revelation.

"You know me, then? Ah! I was to blame: I was mistaken. We all have much to regret; but I was in a net. My eyes have lately been opened. I thought Geoffrey Thornhill my enemy; I was my own. I would have slain him, sir, in fair fight, it is true, but not like a dog. There has been foul wrong done—forgery; and both have been robbed by that scoundrel Burke." Here the sick man rose, and the flushed face and trembling limbs told of energy too great for an enfeebled frame. "If there's a God in heaven, he shall suffer for it. I was duped, deluded. I was persuaded that your father had eaten my birthright; and I thought myself justified in my revenge. But I have since learnt all. And forgive me, Mr. Thornhill."

"You are under a delusion, Mr. Donald."

"Kildonald sir, is my name; Kildonald. You must have heard it. I would have killed your father, and you have restored to me my daughter. That's Heaven's retribution. And how——"

Charlie rose. "You recur to very painful subjects. I have before heard much of what you say. I believe punishment awaits the guilty man, even in this world, and at this distance of time. But excuse me, if I seek no disclosures, but such as can be, and will be, used unscrupulously and unconditionally." The fact is, that Charlie was so unprepared for the outburst he had just heard, that he was by no means certain how far Kildonald intended to criminate himself.

"Stay, Mr. Thornhill; there are some things you must hear still." Here the flush passed from Kildonald's cheek; he collected himself, ran his hand over his forehead, and appeared to think for a minute or two; then became more quiet; and

finally relapsed into apparent indifference. He spoke of the property which had been bought by Mr. Thornhill, but which had never been paid for. He admitted the injustice he had done Charlie's father in believing him to be his debtor ; late events had shown Burke to be the recipient of these rents, and to have defrauded both parties. He hoped to be able to prove it ; but his information was vague, and his energies gone.

Charlie replied to these confessions by inquiries which assisted his own views, but he received no confirmation of his own suspicions, so he kept them to himself. He had little doubt that the mystery would one day be cleared up, and he did not feel inclined to risk anything by premature explanations. He kept his own counsel : not always an easy thing to do.

Kildonald was a vain man, not a proud one, and his mind was weakened by illness. This induced him to tell Charlie a certain amount of truth. He was to blame in his quarrel with Geoffrey Thornhill ; but few men could have humiliated themselves sufficiently to have confessed all. He satisfied his conscience and his gratitude by a half-measure of justice ; but he did not say, "I hated your father because he was acute enough to detect me, and bold enough to denounce me ; and I would have shot him, because he was a bar to my advancement in fashionable life." He did not detail the miserable transaction in which he had been involved, and which led to the quarrel ; but he placed all to the account of his hatred of the man who would have bought his estate and supplanted him in his reputation and position as a landholder and a gentleman. Two men only could have told the truth, and nothing but the truth—the sincere penitent, or the utterly degraded ; and Kildonald was neither the one nor the other.

CHAPTER XLVI.

OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

"Fama, malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum
Mobilitate viget,"—VIRG. *Æn.* IV.

IN a few days Kathleen Kildonald, as I may now call her, was back at the Meyerheims', and Charlie was occupied, as usual, at the bank. No one, to have seen and conversed with that undemonstrative gentleman, would have imagined the match he carried about with him ready to explode the train he had laid at any moment, and yet retaining it till he should be sure that the explosion would be followed by the proposed effect. In England, indeed, in certain circles he furnished a subject for club-gossip and dinner-table conversation, and shone not in a light so amiable as could be wished.

"Well, Towler, that's a rum go of Charlie Thornhill's in Frankfort ; such a deuced quiet fellow, too ; much more like his brother Tom." The speaker stood on the steps of the Guards' Club House, and addressed himself to a brother officer of remarkably doggy appearance on the step below.

"Demme, it's always your quiet fellows that do the mischief. Look at me." Whether Mr. Towler meant that he was a quiet mischievous person, or an example of irregular but irreproachable virtue, is doubtful.

"But, dash it ! fancy bolting with the governess, and being brought back together in triumph by the lover, who rode beside the carriage, with a loaded pistol to his ear. Besides, I thought he was engaged to one of Dacre's sisters?"

"Oh ! that's off long ago. He was scratched as soon as they found he'd got no money from Henry Thornhill," chimed in young Foozleton. "They want money ; the market's tight at Gilsland."

"What became of old Thornhill's money, do you suppose?"

"Left it all to the Lying-in Hospital, because Tom wouldn't give up racing."

"It's not true that the girl is the daughter of the man that murdered his father, is it?" said the first speaker.

"No, not exactly that ; but there was some story about his being under the surveillance of the police some time back.

Hartzstein saw him coming out of the Polizei, or whatever they call the place, with a gens-d'arme after him who sleeps in the porter's lodge."

"Poor Charlie!" said Towler; "that's more mysterious than agreeable." And they went their way.

"Mary Stanhope," said Mrs. Thornhill, "what is this story about Charlie that they say Edward Dacre brought from Frankfort, about some governess?"

"Probably some horrible falsehood, if it's found its way about London. The truth remains so long at the bottom of the well that it gets drowned altogether."

"But what is it that they said at Lady Sarah Screamer's-dale's?"

"Nothing that you need fret about. Only that Charlie has fallen in love with a beautiful girl, a governess in Frankfort, and that—— Well, the natural consequence had ensued."

"And who said that, I should like to know?" said Mrs. Thornhill, who honoured chastity in man as well as woman, and was most unfashionably angry. "I don't believe a word of it. I suppose it was that scandalous old Mrs. Barnacles, whose own son carried off that poor girl from Lady Hemingford's. Anything else, I wonder?"

"Yes, plenty; they finished the story satisfactorily. They said that he was seen in the carriage with her in the evening; that she had mysteriously disappeared, and not been heard of since; and that he takes a long ride out of Frankfort every evening."

"And do you believe a word of it, Mary?"

"Not one syllable," said Mary Stanhope: "he would rather cut his hand off. So let's go to bed, dear. Come along." And they did not believe it; but there were others who did.

The truth is, Edward Dacre was not very strong-minded, and, though a very good fellow, had unwittingly done some mischief. First, knowing nothing about Charlie's *penchant* for his sister, beyond that of a boyish fancy, he told a friend of hers of the pretty Irish girl at Frankfort, and of Charlie's attentions, as insinuated by Hartzstein and De Weiler. Then his friend mentioned the staid Charlie's peccadillo, as something to laugh at at the club. Then two or three old chums of Thornhill pretended to be much amused by it, and carried the news home to their wives. These wives told other wives, until it came round to Mr. Dacre's ears; and Teddy was fain to admit something like

the truth of Charlie's attachment in the presence of his sisters. The position of Edith and Charlie was just of that nature that nothing could be said upon the subject to her ; and yet nobody's mouth was stopped by it. She was a sort of *fiancée* by courtesy among her intimates ; but it was not a courtesy which no man or woman was bound to respect. It affected her spirits to a certain extent ; for one thing, and one thing only, startling enough in all conscience, led her to believe in the possibility of his desertion. She looked forward to the death of Henry Thornhill as altering her position ; but when it came unexpectedly, she had a right to expect that her lover would have claimed her openly, and have acknowledged their engagement before the world. She knew nothing of the circumstances of the case, and her conjectures were natural enough. And now she was beset on all sides, and if not an unbeliever, at least perplexed with doubts.

But Charlie had a firm friend at court. Alice Dacre knew him, and upheld him. "Don't throw away your happiness upon idle reports, Edith. Depend upon it, there is something of which we know nothing. Charlie's character is worth a great deal of London gossip ; and according to Teddy's own account, he didn't even see him."

"But why hasn't he spoken to dear papa ? And how long does he expect one to wait, now that there can be no further need of delay ?" And Edith Dacre pouted a little.

"Never mind. If you love Charlie Thornhill, trust him."

"Ah ! it's all very well, dear Alice, to say 'Never mind ;' but you don't quite understand the feeling."

"Perhaps not," rejoined Alice with a very heavy sigh. "But I won't give my troth till I can trust ; and then mountains should not shake me."

Charlie himself was at this time unconscious of the construction to be put upon his silence. He argued simply thus—If I propose now, I have nothing to offer ; and I don't wish to risk a refusal, which her father would be fully justified in giving. He was, besides, quite honest in leaving her to accept any other offer. But Charlie was little versed in women, and did not well consider how happy they are in such silken bonds, or what a disadvantage it is to them to be so. One other motive deterred him—the obligations the family, and especially the girl herself, lay under to him personally. And though he knew the value of such honest love as his own, he would not put

Mr. Dacre in the awkward position of saying "Yes," from a sense of gratitude to the preserver of his child. He believed in Edith ; and he would take his chance and wait.

About the same time there came a bundle of letters and papers from England. Diver had done wonders, and, with the assistance of the police, was hunting his foxes beautifully. It was hard work when their lines diverged, as they had done, one in London and the other in America ; but the lines were coming together again, and pretty quickly. Charlie had been wisely silent, excepting to the right people, and his conjectures had proved all but conclusive. Burke was still wanted : his tool was safe at hand, and already gone to ground. So Charlie put the finishing touch to his previous information by detailing as much of his own adventure as he thought fit, and some desultory portions of his conversation with Kildonald ; and Mr. Diver was not long in getting that excellent hound Bradhall, the detective, upon the scent ; and that gentleman appeared in Frankfort itself before very long, as we shall see.

Amongst the newspapers was one which Charlie opened with some degree of curiosity, "The Cockfighter's Chronicle," not because he felt particularly interested that week in the Liverpool weights, or the last deposit of Mace and the Unknown, or the explanation of the last Deerfoot swindle, or Billy the rat-dog, or Captain Jones's testimonial as the great amateur runner of the day, but because he saw a paragraph most portentously streaked with black marks for his especial information. It was signed "Œdipus," though, as that interesting *littérateur* was on the Continent for the good of his health, it could hardly come from him. "Something pleasant, however, from some d——d good-natured friend, I suppose," said Charlie, lighting a cigar. And sitting down by an open window, he read a startling announcement.

It exceeded the ordinary gossip of one of the most talented reporters of the sporting news of the day. After relating, with considerable humour, his visit to the various haras of the Continent, his opinion of the modern system of French breeding, and making many pertinent remarks on the men and manners which were by no means new to him, he proceeded to speak of the various fashionables who were at that time enjoying themselves, and getting rid of their time and their money at Homburg, Wiesbaden, Spa, and Ems ; and he naturally enough, and without the slightest *malice prepense*, but rather in a cheerful,

gossiping manner, arrived at Frankfort. The pleasure of introducing Charlie was too great, and he finished a very excellent article in the following memorable words :—

“We were so fortunate as to meet with Mr. Charles Thornhill, a sportsman of the very first water, and so celebrated as a horseman in our own country. It will be no mean gratification to the friends of that gentleman to learn that there is no truth in the reports which were so prevalent of his compulsory absence from Frankfort, but that he is about to be united to a lady of ancient Milesian family and of great personal beauty. We can only trust that one so capable of adorning society will return to his own country, of which his brother, Mr. Thornhill, of Thornhills, is so distinguished an ornament.

“*ŒDIPUS.*”

At the first perusal of this article, Charlie was inclined to be much amused. Then he got to the conclusion, and saw himself. And a very pretty object he appeared. What, in the name of fortune, were these reports? Nothing creditable at least; and no man appreciated the value of an honest name more highly than Charles Thornhill. He had his own ideas of a gentleman—peculiar perhaps, but by temperament or education he had a sense of the true metal in distinction from the false. Curious suspicions took a more palpable form as he watched the eddying wreaths of smoke that curled slowly from his mouth, and he felt called upon to determine on some course of action, he did not very well know what. He was not impulsive—that we very well know—or he would have written to Edith Dacre a denial of the whole business. He had plenty of what the world calls friends, but he knew the difference between a Greenwich dinner and a troublesome service; so he did not trouble them. His ideas, at length, resolved themselves into two courses. He wrote a letter to Lady Marston, and he swore to horsewhip Mr. Smith whenever he could catch him; and Charlie was to be accounted a man of his word.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE MODERN SQUIRE'S TEMPTATIONS.

"Now black and deep, the night begins to fall,
A shade immense!"—THOMSON'S *Seasons*.

AND what had Tom Thornhill been doing since he left Como and Naples? He had been living on good intentions in half the capitals in the world, and occasionally indulging in the luxury of very deep play to make up for lost time. It seemed as though a card, or a bet, or a speculation had for him a species of fascination, such as we see exercised by the electro-biologist over weak minds. "You must come to me, sir; you can't resist; come you must." And then you saw the veins swell, and the hands fixed, and the muscles rigid; and just as you begin to delight in the disappointment of the empiric, behold! the muscles relax, the glued feet are loosened, and the patient does not walk or stagger, but rushes with frantic violence towards his master. Paris, Vienna, London, and half the fashionable towns in England, had triumphed in their turn. He had shut himself up for days, and debarred himself of all possibility of temptation. Miserable and out of spirits, he strolled from the Hôtel Bedford to the Boulevards. "Hallo, Carlingford, how came you here?" and in one moment he was the Tom Thornhill of Oxford, of Melton, and of London once more. He became the noisiest of the noisy, the universal favourite; nor could he drag himself away again to his solitary apartment from the charming little dinner or supper with Mademoiselle Aspasie and her lovely friend of the Rue St. Honoré. Who so gay, who so entertaining as M. Dornhill? And how he spoke French! His grammar did not stand criticism, but his manner, his accent, his voice, and even his blunders, were the fashion. "De Rougemont," said Carlingford, "my friend Thornhill: Thornhill, the Duc de Rougemont, premier chasseur de France. The duc is a veritable Englishman in the matter of horseflesh, and will be proud to be instructed by the best man in Melton." Then Tom forgot his virtue and his misery together, and became more reckless still. Had it ended with his little dinners or suppers—well; Alice might have reigned supreme; but they played: De Rougemont with the violent *abandon* of a Frenchman, with whom nothing is

comparable, as a gambler, but a modern Russian or an Irishman, before the introduction of prudence by the union ; Carlingford with the happy indifference of an English noble of endless wealth ; and Thornhill with a determination of backing his ill-luck, which set all bounds at defiance. On one occasion, indeed, he was found (upon a short visit to London to raise money, when no one was in town, and when Arlington Street was up, pavement and all) to have steeped himself in a great city speculation in molasses, and which came off in a fortnight with a trifling loss of ten thousand, which had to be raised on the estate.

Vienna was even worse than Paris. There he had some chance, as he was a capital whist-player, and, but for sheer ill-luck, must have stood his ground. Not so in the Austrian capital. There he had no chance. The women made love to him, and, as it was impossible to pay in kind, he compromised matters by losing his hundreds with singular grace. To tell the truth, most of them accepted the compromise without much difficulty, and liked the notes they received quite as well as the *billets doux* they professed to look for. What is to be done with a determined countess, still young, and a victim of *la belle passion*, who is known to suffer at home from incompatibility of temper, and "proposes" with a satin slipper on the top of your pet corn ? To win her money is to waste your time : to lose your own keeps up a wholesome excitement, and saves your conscience. He was beset, too, by *lionnes* of every description, who rode with him, shot with him at the *tir au pistolet*, played billiards, and smoked cigarettes ; and he was eventually chased out of Vienna by a desperate old woman, who was not satisfied without having his money and his love too. The men were delighted with him, of course ; for he rode their horses, drank their wines, gave excellent dinners, and, though the best-dressed man in Vienna, was so far removed from the military style in vogue, that he excited no jealousy whatever.

In England the breaking up of his stud was supposed to have curtailed his racing expenses considerably, if it did nothing towards diminishing his passion for the turf. Never was so mistaken a notion.

"Thank God, Tom Thornhill has at length been persuaded to give up his racing establishment !" said old Dacre to Corry, whom he met on the steps of White's as he was sauntering down St. James's Street in the spring of the year : "that has been the ruin of him. He's one of the finest fellows alive, but so enthu-

siastic about his own horses that, with a thousand pounds a day, he must have been ruined had he gone on."

"Ah! his poor father was very much like him, but married young, and it saved him. But don't imagine that your friend Tom is cured of his mania. He's just as enthusiastic about his friends' horses as he was about his own; and what's worse, he hasn't the management of them. I have just heard him back a horse of Carlingford's for the Derby, that has no more chance of winning than you or I, only because Boldthrow called him a leggy brute, which he is, and only intended for a book-horse, which he is not. He certainly is the most inveterate gambler I ever knew. The night before he went abroad he told us all, rather solemnly, that he had given up play of every kind, and that he had determined upon never betting another hundred as long as he lived. We were bold enough to doubt his self-denial, upon which he at once offered to lay 500*l.* to 400*l.* about it instantly, and did not seem to consider his offer as a singular entry in the first line of the new leaf he had just turned over."

Corry had no idea of Dacre's feelings, or the interest he felt in the subject of their conversation, or the former might have withheld his information. But an English gentleman stands any kind of skinning, from a tight-boot to the scalping-knife, and old Mr. Dacre bore it as one of his order. But he went home sorely oppressed, and he swore again a round oath that, with his consent, Tom Thornhill should never have his daughter; he would rather see her in her grave. It was a superfluous figure of speech, as the world goes, but he was speculating, unwittingly, upon a strength of feeling which might have presented the alternative as the only one. A broken heart is not the common termination to a fashionable career; and unsuccessful love in the higher circles is met by so many remedies, that the most virulent form of the disease is seldom fatal. They take it lightly in the Upper Ten Thousand, whether from early inoculation or from the coolness of temperature to which they are habitually subject, I cannot say. Still, broken hearts are known; and Alice Dacre was fighting a cruel fight on the side of her principles. Victory would be a terrible loss if it came short of life.

I need hardly say that rumour was not silent as to the course of profligacy on which Tom Thornhill had entered. His debts and embarrassments had long been the talk of the clubs; and, though everyone spoke of them with a sigh, nobody seemed inclined to settle them. Thornhills was deeply mortgaged; but

his mother continued to live in it with Mary Stanhope. Tom himself came down with a party of men occasionally for a few days' shooting; but he had forgotten, what he once so loved to dream of, the responsibilities of a country gentleman. At present they consisted of a grand battue: six guns and the rustic population of two villages; three or four keepers and four hundred head, twice in the year. Then he was in Paris, and not heard of for a month. Suddenly he emerged, and again his old familiar cry was heard, cheerful as when a boy, "I've laid 400 to 300, and by G— he don't win: yes he does; no, yes, no; beat on the post; like my luck."

In the midst of it all, nobody saw that he was older: they saw nothing but the same cheerful spirits which had made him the life of every society into which he went. They never watched him half an hour after old Stripp, the steward, had been with him, or after a long-deferred interview with his man of business, or when he was calculating at how far short of forty per cent. his last 10,000*l.* was borrowed. They never saw him throw himself into a chair opposite the dying embers of his fire when, with his usual good-nature, he had ordered his valet not to sit up for him. There he sat watching, in his mind's eye, the form of her he loved, and knew that every day placed a fresh impediment and a greater distance between them. Then he thought how few years back he could have led her from her father's home to a house replete with every comfort, a companion for his widowed mother, to have shared the love and respect to which he could not be blind. How would his tenantry and dependants have loved her! first for his sake, and then for her own, while she dispensed the hospitality she was so well calculated to adorn. And what a heaven upon earth might his home have been! and now what was it? Diminished means had taken him from its shelter, and a hard struggle made it barely consistent with the comfort and position of his mother and good Mary Stanhope. The world saw nothing of this; but Tom Thornhill acknowledged to himself that his spirits and his glitter were as false as the last bright glare of the flame which makes the coming darkness more sad, or the nodding plumes and glittering baubles which conceal the shroud within.

The world, too, in its good-nature, did not always spare him. Some said his experience, which he had bought so dearly, was beginning to serve him; that he was beginning to know how to take care of himself. Fast men and fast women still adhered

to him : they believed in him as of old. At all events he was not nearly as bad as they ; and men do admire sometimes what is very inconvenient to imitate. But the Dacres heard rumours, and were not in a position to contradict or to sound them.

"Poor Tom Thornhill!" said his friend Harlington. "I'm deuced sorry for that fellow: he lost a heavyish stake on the Cambridgeshire."

"Poor Tom Thornhill!" said Lady Montague Mastodon. "I've no patience with him. If it had been some of you empty-headed fellows, I should have had some sympathy to throw at you ; but a clever man, with more than a fair share of sense and principle, to have walked with his eyes open into such a mess, I have no patience with him. Madness can be his only excuse, and then he ought to be locked up. Is Thornhill to be sold, then?"

"It must come to the hammer, unless he has such a *coup* as was never heard of before." And here Harlington took a pinch of Prince's mixture, a vice of a bygone aristocracy.

"And what's he going to do next? Why in the world didn't his brother come into the world before him? Providence don't know its business, unless the transfer of old hereditary property is part of it."

"Thornhill, you'd better come to Baden," said Lord Carlingford.

"Baden? so I will. I shall go mad if I stop here. When shall we start? to-morrow?"

"Not exactly; but we'll be off next week, if you like."

"Very good: the sooner the better." And to Baden they went, via Antwerp and Heidelberg, while their studs were being got ready for November.

Alice Dacre said nothing, not a word. To whom should she talk? Edith could not have understood her. It's a sad thing to worship a broken idol, and to know that it is broken. Her head was not bowed; but nature asserted her sway, and she was declining. Still she struggled on. A warmer climate was recommended, and they started slowly for an Italian winter. Tom had her heart, and he was breaking it. But shall not a man do what he will with his own?

As Charlie sat reading the "*Allgemeine Zeitung*," that is, pretending to look for the money column, one morning the door opened, and the servant introduced a person without a name; but, understanding each other, the ceremony was omitted by mutual consent. The individual in question, who presented

himself and his own card, was so far remarkable as to be the very least remarkable person in the world. I never saw anyone so utterly undistinguished from hundreds of others as Mr. Bradhall. He was neither short nor tall, plain nor ugly, well dressed nor badly dressed ; and I hardly think anyone, under the rank of a royal duke, would have recognised him under a third or fourth visit. How his mother ever knew him, if his brothers or sisters——however, he must have been an only child : there lay the great secret of his success. And this characteristic *inidentity* extended to his clothes. His hat was like every other hat, a great difficulty in these days of capital latitudinarianism. His clothes were just no way extraordinary ; indeed, anybody, in looking at them, if he had thought at all about them, would have believed either that the man was made for them, or that his clothes would have been equally becoming to himself. I rather think this latter would have been the prevailing idea. I know it was mine. His nose appeared straight. I don't know that it was not slightly *retroussé* after all. I never met anyone who could tell whether his hair curled or not ! and his eyes——oh ! by the way, his eyes had a peculiarity, and Charlie Thornhill discovered it : they did not wink. The constant habit of looking wickedness straight in the face, and through and through, had baked them, hardened them to such an extent that moisture was thrown away upon them : they stared iniquity clean out of countenance.

“Pray sit down, Mr. Bradhall,” said Charlie, reading from the card, and then waiting. Mr. Bradhall did sit down, but not precisely on the middle of his chair : at the same time he dived cautiously into a breast-pocket of his coat, and produced a letter, which he handed over to his host with as much care as if it were a cocked revolver.

“From Mr. Diver,” said Charlie, once more reading the few lines. “Your's is a hard life, Mr. Bradhall.”

“Sometimes. The present job has been tolerably easy, but we have suddenly missed our man from Baden or Frankfort, and without any apparent reason.”

“And you are led to believe that I can assist you !”

“You or your servant ;” and Bradhall drew from his pocket again a small note-book. “He is under the surveillance of the city police, by whose order I am unable to discover——”

“If you mean my Irish servant——”

“Just so, sir ; Donovan, *alias* Heenan, *alias* Daly.”

"I put him there myself."

"It does you infinite credit, sir. He is one of those men who once committed, or assisted at, a great crime, and it frightened him : he's been quiet enough for years ; but he's not the man I want : he's perfectly safe, and to be had at any moment."

"Then who is it you do want, Mr. Bradhall, if the question involves no indiscretion?"

"We want Burke, and we must have him. We shall put you to some inconvenience, for we must take Daly when the time comes. We are not quite clear what part he played ; but he knows enough to make a valuable witness, and he must become king's evidence. Can you help us any further in the matter of Burke?"

"I think I can ; and if you want him, you will find him at Baden race-course this day fortnight : he goes to lose a race on a horse that, if fairly ridden, must win ; and gentleman-riders of that class are not so common here as in England." Charlie then told Mr. Bradhall of his own adventure, in which Burke figured so conspicuously ; his servant's accidental recognition of him, and involuntary pronunciation of the name ; his own conjectures, and of his information given to Diver ; of his suspicions of Daly not destroyed by his uniform honesty and good conduct, and of his precaution in placing him under the eye of the police. "And now should you like to see him?"

"It would be desirable," said Mr. Bradhall, "on more accounts than one."

Charlie rang the bell, and desired Daly to be sent up with a small tray and a bottle of niersteiner. He could then give his orders about the horses.

"There," said he, when his orders had been obeyed, and Daly had been some minutes in the room, "that's the man."

"I know him now ; and how long have you suspected him of being concerned in the unhappy murder of the late Mr. Thornhill?"

"Since my last visit to England."

"And you've held your tongue ; and he suspects nothing."

"Nothing whatever."

"Excuse me, sir, but what a detective you would have made!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BADEN BADEN.

“Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.”

I REGARD it as a privilege to have seen Baden in the winter—in her undress, in fact. It cost me neither the bowing and scraping employed in approaching the private boudoir of a great lady, nor the hard fighting in the waiting-rooms of St. James's Palace to the reception-room of my sovereign. Still it is a privilege. I suppose those linden trees never occur to the ordinary visitor as sometimes laden with glittering, diamond-like icicles, or some of the beauties of those hanging woods round the Alten Schloss as heightened by the chaste covering of winter. Men who feast on truffles and the chefs-d'œuvre of an artiste like Ude find a difficulty in imagining the pleasures of a sirloin *au naturel*. Baden is not an amphitheatre of natural beauty to the *habitué* of that region of luxury: is rather an amphitheatre of footlights, fireworks, orange-peel, and playbills, the whole concluding with a general insight into the nature of blue-lights and pandemonium. As to a wet day in that place out of season I can say nothing, no one having yet survived it. A veil is properly drawn over so awful a spectre. And yet it is exceedingly beautiful, independently of its attractions. Just as some fair corpse lies more hallowed in its rest without the spirit, when that spirit has been of evil. In the whole of the Black Forest scarcely one spot possesses more natural beauties. Its groves, its walks, its lindens, and its gardens; its pine-clad hills, its ruins, its historical and legendary interest; even its buildings, its magnificent hotels, its palatial salons, require not the demons of criminal luxury or baleful passion to give them intrinsic value. Seen with unprejudiced eyes, this little spot has claims upon our regard which far outweigh those which bring the votaries of pleasure from far and near to drown conscience or ennui in the streams of sensual indulgence or sordid avarice. But autumn comes, and with her wand veils the beauty of summer in the mists of enchantment. Nature vanishes as Circe seats herself upon her German throne, and the art and science of luxury and vice reign supreme.

Nothing of this kind occurred to Charles Thornhill as he entered Baden Baden on a lovely afternoon of September, 18—.

This young man had his faults, and an absence of poetry, imagination, and refinement was among them. He had been accustomed to take the world as he found it, but not to moralize upon its condition. I dare say the reader likes him as well as most men of his or her acquaintance: I do myself. But his virtues were rather those of accident and constitution. His mind was something not unlike his body: it was stalwart, upright, manly. His courage was the basis of what the world called his principles. He was never afraid from a boy; so he always spoke the truth, and acted upon his convictions. It is not in the nature of some men to be mean; and all vice is mean if examined by strict canon. As, for instance, Charlie never gambled; but he hardly knew why. It never occurred to him as wrong or vicious in others. He forgot any command as to "covetousness," or whence it came; but he thought it ungenerous to win from poor men; and a sort of prudence, worldly if you will, bid him beware of trusting an earthen vessel in company with iron pots; and so on, with all the excesses he avoided. As he drove to the Hôtel Stephanie Bad he said to himself, "Charming, monstrous pretty, these villas, and trees, and gardens, and the little trickling trout-stream." As a group of gamblers descended the steps of the Kursaal, "Fools," said he: "with zero and après in favour of the table, they must lose in the long run." Indeed, if he condemned vice and folly in himself, it is very doubtful whether he was as severe to them in the abstract. So he came to play his part at Baden Baden, and to enjoy what he cared to enjoy of its frivolities. I am sorry for my female readers, because they are apt to make a hero of such an one as Charlie, and now their idol, which they imagined to be of gold, is found to be only clay.

"Rooms here?" said Charlie, alighting from a yellow calèche amidst a flourish of whips from his yellow-coated postilion. The waiter feared not. "Send the landlord to speak to me." Herr Tischtuch appeared. "Have you room for me here?"

"Not a hole in Baden. Most distinguished English lords have been sent away, and the Furst von Bolsöver is just gone on in despair towards Darmstadt."

"Is Mr. Thornhill arrived? I expected to meet him."

"Not yet; but we have rooms for him—two bed-rooms and a salon."

"Well, then, take off the luggage. I am his brother, and the second room is for me." Charlie opened the door and jumped out.

"Monsieur will show his passport;" and he did so.

"That is good; and the Herr Brother will arrive?"

"To-day," said Charlie. "My horses are here: my servant came yesterday."

"Ach! forgive me, of course. Your horses are here, and all is right," At that moment Tom Thornhill drove up, and as Charlie's empty carriage made way for more flourishes of the whip, the brothers greeted one another affectionately. "This is delightful."

"Looking so well, Charlie; banking agrees with you—does with most people. Money passes through your hands; that's pleasant enough: still better when it sticks." These disjointed fragments were the most commercial Tom had ever been known to utter. "Now let us go upstairs. Waiter, send up those port-manteaus. Dinner at seven, Herr Tischtuch. How are the daughters? And don't forget the ice."

"Young Mr. Thornhill don't want icing: he looks cool enough." And Tischtuch trotted off bent on obliging a favourite customer.

Tom and his brother dined *al fresco*, or nearly so, under a roof, but with open doors and windows looking on to the cheerful gardens, rippling stream, alleys, and hanging woods. Now, at seven P.M., the whole place was studded with tables of various sizes; some to accommodate a happy and mysterious couple, who were evidently not desirous of extending the circle of their acquaintance; some for a *parti quarré*, whose roistering mirth and joviality courted attention and greeting from all their neighbours, and whose ambition, if to blush at all, was certainly not to do so unseen. Here and there longer tables were laid, where a mixed company—half a dozen men of the fast Parisian lot, and a couple of young ladies whose toilettes were as loud as their manners—were discussing men, women, and racing, past, present, and to come, with all the gusto which temporary excitement, and minds above and below all criticism, invariably give. The constant popping of champagne corks, and the snatches of song from the mellow lips of a beauty of a Palais Royal, mingled with every dialect of every tongue, from the purest Gallic to the most sonorous Gaélic, French, German, English, and the Irish of our own reporter, who is conversing with Mrs. Machash on the probable effect of a glass of whisky punch in place of that "nasty wathery drink that promotes the growth of sore throats and internal hæmorrhage;" while she is only thinking of that

"ojous woman in all them lappets and white lace," and wondering how she should astonish the natives with her best bonnet from Cork, whose distinguishing characteristic was scarlet and yellow trimmings and a double poppy, which stood up like a sentinel to keep watch over the rest of the finery. A bow-window added considerably to the general confusion, where it was understood that an English milord, who was always borrowing money of the croupier, and breaking the bank with it, entertained a mixed party of Russian princes and demi-monde; while old Tischtuch and his waiters rushed in and out, and up and down the steps of the alcove, in a state of perspiration and bewilderment as if the house was on fire.

"Good hock, Charlie?"

"Excellent, if that fellow had not iced it. But he's a Frenchman. They understand nothing but champagne, which is very like themselves." •

"You don't like the French," said Tom, draining his glass.

"Not much, I confess. What a noisy set they are! Look at that woman, Tom, and that idiot sharing her plate, and wearing her hat."

"That's one of the first men in Paris, Charlie—a rising man at the Chamber, and one of the best fellows out: that's De Clermont."

"And what's the man on the other side of that pretty woman, shying pellets of bread across the table? There'll be a row in a minute or two."

"That's—oh! I forget his name—*attaché* to the French Embassy at Vienna."

"He looks a diplomatist. France must have great confidence in him," said Charlie, as the young Frenchman, decorated with a bonnet, commenced waltzing with one of his male companions. Charlie rose from the table and lighted a cigar, and as he and Tom strolled down the steps in the twilight, a buzz of admiration and unsuppressed "Who's that" followed them as they went their way over the little bridge towards the Kursaal.

"Come, Mademoiselle Eugénie you know well enough, *vous hypocrite*."

"Parole d'honneur," said Eugénie, jumping up to have another peep.

"There, don't excite yourself, and I'll tell you. But he won't do for you: he cares for nothing but play. You'd be jealous of the ace of spades in a fortnight."

In the meantime Tom and his brother reached the Kursaal.

The walk in front of the rooms was crowded to excess: every chair and table was occupied. Some were drinking coffee, some wine; and the fragrant air, the balmy night breeze, was laden with the wreaths of—of—what shall I say?—bad tobacco. Long pipes, short pipes, and cigars, Pernambucos, Tordesillas, Cabanas, and all the growth of Lubeck, Bremen, and Hamburg had nigh smothered the pretensions of the true Havannah. The huge globes of gas in front of the assembly rooms were blazing in full light, and under its portico, or leaning and sitting in every variety of posture, men and women discussed the all-important subject of to-morrow's racing. Every nation seemed to have contributed its quota to the whole. Russians, with highly-dressed and delicate-looking women laden with jewellery, strode straight towards the tables; Germans of all types—the Austrian, the Prussian, the proud and handsome Hungarian noble; the Pole, forgetful for a moment of the barbarity of his masters, contrasted favourably in intelligence and civilization with his rulers; Paris sent her motley groups, and England hers. Here the highest type of Norman or Saxon aristocracy strode regardless of criticism or consequences of the questionable company in which it was playing its part. Vice, in its most attractive garb, from the purlieus of the Cité d'Antin and St. John's Wood, affected to have raised itself to a fictitious respectability by the level in which it found itself; and the virtuous and reputable were fain to come and air their consciences, *en route* for the thousand-and-one winter-quarters south and east of Baden, by an hour or two of laxity and dissipation; as if their respectability had been got up above the mark, in order to be brought down, by a good hearty gallop, into working condition. A starched petticoat, hung up in a damp atmosphere, sits all the better for the change.

In this large room, this vast *salle*, with its white and gold, and well-mirrored walls, and smoothly-polished floor, were some half-dozen people. They consisted of a French *roué* of the first water, a wit, a *bon-vivant*, a gentleman, a duke, who had sacrificed health, talents, and position to popularity with the *demi-monde*. Clever men and good women wept over the short-comings of De Rougemont. There he was, with a pleasant smile playing round his lips, which had just parted for the emission of a *bon mot*, which his companions were enjoying. They were a Paris banker, a secretary of legation, a ruined gambler, a Russian

prince, and an ex-danseuse, who was just then trying her *pas de fascination* on the stone floor of the Northerner's heart. There is but little elasticity in marble, however highly polished.

The inner rooms, opening from the *salle*, were devoted to play. Everybody at Baden is supposed to play : almost everybody does so. Some with a nervous, anxious look, and an uncomfortable twitching of the fingers, and an expression of face which says nothing but "Gold, more gold : " such men always back their ill-luck. Some with a cold, glazed look, which watches night after night the heap grow less, and feels the heart grow harder and harder : true, but unsuccessful gamblers. Others, with a wild reckless impatience, betokening nothing more at present than a love of excitement, a bold, buccaneering sort of gambler, who loves to throw down his *rouleau*, and leave it on the colour. A few *pettifoggers* at florins and five-franc pieces ; your respectable *cit* from Balaam Hill, who counts the florins to his wife and daughters, which he has brought away the night before, and holds his tongue about the three Napoleons which have mysteriously disappeared on the previous occasion. The tables live by these men, and there are half a dozen who live, very badly, by the tables.

I think that, even in the matter of gambling, Charlie Thornhill exercised a sort of influence over his brother, and most men with whom he came in contact. His associates did not care to be openly dissolute before him. Many were so, but they wished him away, and would rather have put it off to another time. Be that as it may, Tom did not play that night.

"Who's that, Tom ? " said Charlie, as, at a later hour of the night, they leant over the low, iron balustrade that runs from pillar to pillar in front of the *Kursaal*. Charlie took his cigar from his mouth, and pointed to a handsome, dark man, large, tall, assured-looking, of middle age, dressed heavily but well, not in evening costume, closely shorn, even to the upper lip. He was distinguished-looking without being aristocratic.

That is the *Comte Bernard de Nesle*. He is the ostensible proprietor of the largest stud of race-horses in France ; the largest better, and the best judge of pace in the Jockey Club. He has ruined himself at it, and is making fortunes for his employers : need I say for himself too. Having a large stud, he can almost always make the betting what he likes, and by starting three he can make the running tally with his book."

"Count," said Tom, "what are they laying about Desparado for the Continental St. Leger to-morrow."

The Count looked up, shook the ashes of his cigar to the ground, saluted Tom as if he had not lost sight of him for ten minutes in his life, and answered, "Nothing: there's not a man here with a soul above a five-franc piece, or a heart half as large. I've got on 200*l.*, and if he wins, you'd think that Baden would be beggared. I went all round the rooms to collect that; and yet they can find comfort and consolation in those rascally tables. The zeros are enough to beat any man, *κεραμεις κεραμει.*"

"Come, you shan't say that. I'll lay you 300*l.* more even against the horse; and if he does not win I'll give you a dinner and break the bank afterwards. My brother Charles, Comte Bernard de Nesle;" and the Frenchman acknowledged the compliment with finished grace, as though he only had come to Baden for this purpose; Charles, on his side, with distant politeness. "Gauche!" said the Frenchman to himself.

"What a lovely woman!"

"Where!" exclaimed Charlie and De Nesle at the same time.

"There, standing under the lamp by the orchestra, with a crimson and gold opera cloak, talking to Sir David Mackinnon."

"She's an English woman by birth," said the count, "and married, very young, a celebrated *littérateur*, who is now editor of the——. He treated her shamefully; and there was some story in Paris current about her—I forget what. But here comes one of your compatriots who must know. Mr. Smith, 'Ædipus,' or 'Sphinx,' of your great sporting paper, 'The Cockfighter's Chronicle.' Smith knows everything and everybody. How are you, Smith?"

Tom Thornhill put out his hand, and Smith responded to the greeting. All racing men wanted the good services of "Sphinx" at one time or another. He carried a frightful knout, which he exercised with discriminating zeal. He knew his friends from his enemies. Tom, De Nesle, and the Sphinx dived at once into sporting matters; and though the Sphinx knew no more of a horse than of a quagga, he knew the names and parentage of a great many. It answered his purpose quite as well. Charlie meanwhile was casting first into one waistcoat pocket and then into the other, to find the *paragraph*, which he had carefully abstracted from "The Cockfighter's Chronicle," with which to confront Smith. Luckily Charlie had dressed himself for dinner, or Smith might have been laid up for the races.

"Well, Sphinx, who's to win to-morrow?"

"If the Count de Nesle doesn't know, no one does." This was a left-handed compliment.

"You know Madame Dorval, the editor's wife, Smith?—oh, yes, of course you do. Let's have it. Ah, by Jove! he knows. Come, out with it, that's a good fellow."

"Well, it's a good story. You've heard it, of course, count? No? Oh! by Gad, I'm not sure whether it's true or not; but I had it from first-class authority. Montmorency told me, and he was in the house. You know Dillon? Everybody knows him; he's as mad as a March hare: his grandmother, Lady Elizabeth Carden, was in a private madhouse for years; split the straight-waistcoat, and bolted with the second turnkey. However that's nothing. Dillon was staying in Paris at the Duc de Montpelier's with a large party. Madame Dorval was there, and he fell in love with her. Every man was in attendance, every woman was jealous of her. The consequence was that terrible disclosures were made to Dillon, under the seal of secrecy, of Madame's reputation, particularly with the duke himself. Dillon couldn't ask anyone, you know, for he was bound by solemn pledges of secrecy not to do so. Poor fellow! he's dead. He was desperately in love, and determined to ascertain one fact at least, and to clear her character for his own satisfaction. So one night, when everybody was supposed to be in bed and asleep, Dillon got up, carried a quantity of straw which he had collected, with no end of rubbish and tar, and put it at the foot of the great staircase. The bedrooms were all round the corridor at the top of it, and easily seen. He first of all set light to the straw, and when it was at its fury he rang the alarm-bell for fire, having first placed himself in a convenient ambush for seeing. It was not long before there was a considerable bustle, peepings into the open, and scuffling of feet, and banging of doors, and a mighty rush towards the seat of the conflagration. Madame Dorval was the only woman who did not come out of the wrong room."

"Come, come, Smith that won't do," said the count, who did not like these reflections on his countrywomen.

"Fact, 'pon my soul," said the Sphinx. "Dillon was so convinced of it that he took to his bed and died." And the Sphinx walked on.

"Tom, that's the fellow I came here to horsewhip. I couldn't do it with you here, but I intend to-morrow."

"Horsewhip Œdipus? oh! nonsense; that's absurd. Nobody ever whips Œdipus. He's an amusing beast, and always says what he likes. That's the freedom of the press. What's he been doing to you?"

Charlie explained the paragraph which was in his other waistcoat pocket, and his happy subject of conversation at Frankfort.

"Bless your soul, Charlie, is that all? That's nothing—nothing by Jove! He's said thousands of things of us all. We rather like it—pleasant excitement—abuse when it's bad enough. We'll have him to dinner some day, to see him eat and hear him talk."

At this juncture the Duc de Rougemont put his head over the rails, and said, "Mr. Thornhill, what do you call a gentleman-rider?"

"Gentleman-rider?" said Tom, "Gentleman-rider? Gad! that's not so easy a question to answer. He ought to have a clean shirt—one a day, at least; the least said about language the better, duke: lots of fellows use provincialisms upon principle—credit of the county, you know. Tick with a London tailor almost necessary to qualify I should say; ay, Charlie? and an affair, as they call it, if an Irishman. Grandfathers and grandmothers quite unnecessary. What do you want to know for?"

As Tom Thornhill generally spoke rapidly, and not loudly, much of this was lost on De Rougemont, although a pretty good Englishman; but he understood the general import of the answer to imply that a man might be of the *aucune famille* and yet occupy that distinguished position.

"Because I want to object to one Mr. Williams. He has dirty hands and shirts, and gets drunk in the morning, and doesn't speak like a gentleman, and never associates with them. Yesterday he was playing at skittles with Barnard de Nesle's jockey, and smoking a short pipe in the harness-room with Sneezenkoff's coachman: altogether he keeps very bad company."

"Dirty hands and shirts," said Tom, soliloquising *sotto voce*, "that's bad: drunk in the morning—I'm afraid I've seen the duke drunk earlier in the morning than ever he saw Williams; and as to company—ah! my dear Monsieur de Rougemont—No; it won't do, duke, he must ride: besides I want him to ride for *mè* in the steeple-chase. He's a capital man, and my brother's above the weight."

"Does he ride for money?" said the duke, who had a horse in for the Ladies' Purse and didn't want to be cut out by an Englishman.

"Money?—oh! money. Well, I never asked him. I always put him on something good—say fifty or a hundred to nothing."

"You're wrong, Tom; those are the fellows that spoil steeple-chasing," said Charlie. "I'm not proud, but I see no fun in riding with half the legs and ragamullins in England for company. The Frenchmen are right; though they'll find it difficult to keep so."

The sun was rising, and had already drunk in the morning mists which settled about the valley of the Oos, when Charlie found himself dressed, with nothing to do. Since he had applied himself to business it was a novelty, and he seemed to have lost that facility for engaging zealously in nothing which is such a talent for a pure idler to possess. I am by no means so great an admirer of early rising as to believe every virtue to be embraced by it. I have known very excellent men undeniable sluggards; and, as with sharp, cold, and severe weather, I know hundreds who are always struggling and fighting against their inclination to lie late in bed. Now virtue is the habit of the mind accompanied by pleasurable feeling, and must not be based upon antagonism to its usual actions, any more than the accidental discharge of a gun which brings down one bird in the course of a day will entitle its holder to the reputation of a good shot. Neither is he the more courageous man, whatever sophists may say, who wanders about in a battle-field wishing himself anywhere but where he is, but he who, knowing the danger, really courts her for her own sake, and feels a constitutional pleasure in doing so. When, therefore, I say that Charlie Thornhill was dressed on the following morning by seven o'clock, whilst his brother Tom was soundly sleeping and would sleep till it was nearly time to dress for the course, I do not wish to record any remarkable virtue in the young man—rather a restlessness, which might arise from love, regret, despair, or any other passion which wages continual war with the god of sleep.

Being dressed, it was desirable to do something; and if breakfasting on trout, and smoking cigars, and looking at prospects, and drinking and eating in general, be anything, then Baden-Baden is quite a commercial city, for it goes on all day.

Charlie knew this ; and the difficulty was to do these things most satisfactorily. Besides which, if he had nothing to do he had plenty to think of, and that could be best compassed further back from the footlights of the world's drama than the Hôtel Stéphanie. The thing was now to consider where to go for the trout and cigars in question. To the Alten Schloss, the old château that frowns like an aged seneschal keeping watch over the town, and rebuking it for its worldliness and frivolity. Ah ! old friend ; you've had your time, too, you know, with your gloomy caverns, your galleries, towers, and moats ; you did your wickedness with your bloodshed, and rapine, and wrong. But your vices smacked of nobility and greatness of soul ; they were bastard sisters of courage, and chivalry, and faith. And so you look down on your ward with eyes of affectionate but severe regret. But who shall say that beneath all this luxury, heedlessness, and impulse there is no chivalry, no fortitude, no faith to be found ? Not I, for one.

Charlie lit a cigar, and turned towards the Alten Schloss.

For the first time in his life it occurred to him that he had wasted a great deal of his time. What had he done at Gresham's ? what afterwards ? Nothing. Then he thought of Tom : what a clever fellow he was, and how much beyond him in most things. This had always been the received opinion while they were boys, and it must be true. "And yet," said he to himself, "I'm always fidgeting myself about Tom." The fact is that Charlie was really uneasy. Tom had been so reckless ; and his late habits had taught him that a very few years will utterly cripple an estate like Thornhills, if set about vigorously. Excelsior ! he got up higher, climbing on through the dark pines, and catching here and there a glimpse of a magnificent prospect. "If I could but save him ! or it ! or both !" He emerged from the dark pines at the base of the castle. There was that magnificent prospect stretching away into the far distance : fainter and fainter it became, until the silvery, serpent-like Rhine was lost in the distant hills ; and the blue lines of the horizon mingled imperceptibly with the atmosphere, and lost all definite form. And so did Charles Thornhill's thoughts. For a time they reverted to his breakfast ; delighted he was with material food which was set before him, nor till he had well disposed of it, did he again wander. He was not given to idle musings. It was quite impossible, however, to shut out all castle-building ; so he got on from his brother Tom and his ex-

travagancies to his mother and Mary Stanhope ; and then to his uncle, his curious will, and the explanation to come from Roger Palmer ; and then he thought of himself, and what he might have done had things turned out differently. Had his uncle's fortune come to him, as expected—had he got the few thousands from the Kildonald estate, which seemed even now not impossible—had he made a fortune, if not inherited one—had he gone or written to Edith, told her and her father his plans and hopes, as far as he could, and asked for time—had he, in fact, ascertained beyond all doubt how far he might calculate upon the forbearance of the girl that loved him. And did she really love him ; and how many of her best years was he worth ; and had she seen the "Cockfighter's Chronicle," or not, or had her brother told her of the mysterious or damning paragraph in the article by "Œdipus ;" ought he not to explain, or had he any right to enter upon the question ? Certainly he had ; and a straightforward policy, when practicable, was the best. And now, when should he see her again ? They were gone abroad : report said to Italy ; Lady Marston said "she didn't know where ;" so it must be months, and might be years, before he had the opportunity. But there was a post, and, much as he hated writing, he would write to-night. Confound it, if one of those Italian scoundrels, with their soft Southern voices, handsome eyes and silky beards, were to see her——. But that's absurd. "I know she'll never marry anyone but an Englishman. Still, to make sure, I'll write to-night." As he came to this determination he turned from the broken old tracery of a window through which he had been watching the winding stream in the far distance, bending his train of thought much after its fashion, and right in the low doorway opposite he saw Edith Dacre.

In such a position, and with his coincidence of mental perception at the moment, he may be forgiven for having expected something romantic to arise. Nothing could be less so. As if she had fully expected him to be there, she said, "How dare you smoke so in the presence of ladies, Mr. Thornhill."

"I only see one, the last I expected to see here," and he came and shook hands with her.

"Mamma is outside looking at the view, and papa is with her."

"And Alice?"

"Is not well enough to climb so far. You hardly seem to

know the state of her health?" At the moment she looked less cordially at Charlie, as he thought.

"No, Edith, I did not. I heard she was unwell, but not seriously. She is in Baden?"

"On our way to Italy for the winter."

Mr. and Mrs. Dacre were soon found. Their greeting was cordial. Mr. Dacre had seen Charlie's name among the late arrivals, so that the surprise was naturally one-sided. News from England occupied an half hour more among the ruins. Lady Marston and Sir Frederick's health, and Charlie's own pursuits, came in for a share of attention. Beyond the fact of his presence in Baden the Dacres did not allude to Tom. Charlie remarked the omission; and before long the party began to descend.

Is it very extraordinary that after a short time Edith and Charlie should have found themselves a little in the rear of Mr. and Mrs. Dacre? and that when Charlie proposed to show them a short cut through the wood which, he was sure, came out close by the Neuen Schloss, or new château, that Mr. and Mrs. Dacre, being older than their own children, as we know they were, should have preferred to continue along the road? or that Edith Dacre, at Charlie's request, should have allowed herself to be persuaded? Charlie's natural eye to the country must have stood him in good stead, for he could have known no more about the Baden woods than the road to Jerusalem. They trusted him, however; and Mr. and Mrs. Dacre waited at the Neuen Schloss until they, who took the shortest road, overtook them.

During that short walk those young people said much—much that it was well to know for both of them. At first their conversation was very monosyllabic, but it progressed towards an intelligible sentence or two towards the end. Edith found out that it was no ungenerous motive that had prompted Charlie's silence since his uncle's death; and Charles Thornhill made a clean breast of it by exposing the difficulties and uncertainties of his present position, and his fear to ask her to share with him a want of luxury so different from that of her own home.

"And so, sir, you thought I should have said 'yes' if you had asked me?"

"I've thought so a long time, Edith, and that was the greater reason for not speaking."

"And what made you speak now, Charlie?"

"Your appearance here. I was thinking of you all the morning. I could endure the uncertainty no longer; and at the moment I turned round and saw you, it was with a determination to write to-night; but I shall ask your father to-day."

"And he will say, 'Wait.' I know him so well."

"And love him so much, Edith; so I shall say 'wait,' too."

"No, Charlie, that's not necessary. But you must listen to papa, and—and—Charlie," said she, looking up at him, "I shall never doubt again. Alice has taught me never to mistrust you; but you know I—I—did—just—hear about the Milesian lady. And who is that Mr. Œdipus who tells such stories?"

"Œdipus? Oh! he is Mr. Sphinx; but I don't think I need horsewhip him now."

There were several pauses in the walk that morning. Both looked down, and then up, and their eyes met, and Charlie's smile reflected the innocent happiness of his darling. Now she could see no difficulties, and feared no hindrance. Charlie had spoken, and she dare tell the world that she was his affianced bride. Charlie saw difficulties and delay, but none that he did not promise himself to overcome.

"You are ambitious, Edith. I know you are."

"Very, of a vast possession."

"What is it? A house in Belgravia, an opera box, a mail phaeton, or a park like Thornhills? What is to be the size of it?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No."

"What is your height and weight, Charlie?"

"Exactly?"

"Yes, I must know exactly to a fraction."

"Six feet and half an inch, and twelve stone," said Charlie.

"Then now you know the exact extent of my ambition. Listen, sir, and don't be conceited." Edith tried to smile, but a bright tear or two ran over the lid as she said, "You once saved my life, Charlie, and now you have made all its happiness." She put up her face as she spoke, and when she took it down again there was a great deal of colour in it.

They ran down the next few steps to the Neuen Schloss, and found that the elderly folks, who had been round by the road had only waited twenty-three minutes.

"I thought you didn't know your way, Thornhill, so well as you fancied. You seemed rather puzzled when you started."

Within one week from that time things had changed. Dacre had given a conditional consent to the engagement between Charles Thornhill and Edith. The first day's racing at Baden had taken place. Tom Thornhill had broken the bank, and was the talk of all Baden. He had also been finally rejected by Mr. Dacre; and Alice silently acquiesced in a decision which she knew to be right, and felt to be unmerciful. She was fighting bravely against a malady which the south of Italy could not cure. Cold had nothing to do with it; and the bank had not suffered alone; for Tom Thornhill had half broken the truest heart that ever beat for man. The Dacres, however, were now gone to Italy. Charlie had been recalled from Frankfort, as soon as his furlough was up, to go to Chalkstone and Co. Mr Bradhall had matured his plans by the arrival of an important witness. And Baden was impatiently awaiting the principal day's racing and steeple-chasing on the morrow. Mr. Williams had ridden in company with M. de Rougemont, on the plea of membership of a certain club in England, more sporting than particular; and the Baron de Finance names a horse called Glacier to be ridden by an Englishman whose name does not appear in the bill.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE RACE AND ITS RESULTS.

"Continuo sontes ultrix accincta flagello
Tisiphone quatit insultans."—VIRG. *Æn.* vi.

A GLAZIER is not more unlike a glacier than the road to the Derby is unlike the road to Iffetzeim, the race-course of the duchy of Baden. Rolling along a flat but interesting valley, with the beautiful chain of the Black Forest in the distance, and which, with the woody heights above and around the town, relieved it of all monotony, are carriages of every description. The Russian drosky, the American dog-cart, the Prussian or Paris Berlin, and Hungarian aus-spanner—every sort of hired

vehicle, from the four-horsed barouche, with its yellow jackets, long whips, big boots, and post-horses of official stamp, to the most humble coupé, were all there. There was the eil wagen, and an English-built four-in-hand, with the most elaborate harness, made to look as little like a coach as possible. I am no great admirer of the majority of the modern school of coachmen, but defend me from my friend Sneezenkoff, who officiated. There were the handsome carriages of the royal party, and here and there a Baden hack or two, carrying a Heidelberg student, and a young woman evidently out for the day. If the equipages were bad, the bonnets and toilettes were charming; and the women made up in drapery, what the conveyances wanted in paint.

When a mob is not enthusiastic, a mighty crowd may get along a road without danger, especially before luncheon. Where a race is concerned an Englishman is enthusiastic, a Badener, a Pole, a Prussian, or an Austrian is not. The humour of an upset, connected with horses, does not strike them; and they would rather be last on, or last off, the course than be run into by a drunken post-boy. They begin to like racing very much, but they are blind to the humours of the road down.

The consequence of this was a safe arrival at the Grand Stand, which presented an appearance of festivity quite incompatible with book-making or jobbing of any kind. Trellis work, creeping shrubs, bands of music, pretty women, and men of pleasure replaced the noisy and perspiring crowd yeleft "the ring."

"What are you doing, Morland?" said Tom Thornhill to the only betting-man on the ground.

"Nothing at all, sir; there's no market, and not a hundred pounds in the whole of the Grand Stand."

The course stretched away on a fine, open, common-like piece of ground, surrounded on three sides by forest-trees and sloping sides of hills, dotted with villages and castles. It was admirably marked out with white posts and rails nearly all the way round. The enclosure for the horses joined the stand, and in the centre was a covered platform which commanded a view of the whole course and country for miles. The immediate neighbourhood was a flat, open country; here and there an enormous dyke, but utterly fenceless. It was very heavy, and there was much standing crops of wheat, maize, potatoes, and patches of vegetation and vegetables, such as pertain to poor allotments in our own country. The Thornhills had ridden,

and Daly and Tom's groom had already secured a stable for their horses. The former, however, was still on Kosciusko, who was too fresh to be trusted in a crowded stable, and since his subjugation, was too valuable.

"Who's that cantering down the course, Tom?" said Charlie, as a tall, thin man went down alone on a chestnut horse officially.

"Finest horseman of his day, Charlie. That's Duncan Græme. Went well at Melton, and in Lord Fife's country. Lives in Paris now. Swears he rides better than ever, and the *manège* did it for him. Of course that's humbug. He's gone down to start them."

Just then a remarkably quiet man, but considerably altered from the Mr. Bradhall whom we have seen, by the addition of a drooping moustache, and a small order of merit in the button-hole of his frock coat, looked at Charlie. He was still unlike himself, but exceedingly like everybody else. Charlie whispered a few words to him.

"It's the next race, I think, Mr. Thornhill."

"It is."

"He's here, sir. I've seen him dressed and weighed in. It's all right. Be at hand, and have Daly here."

"I will. There he is on my bay horse. You know him well?"

"I do, sir. Burke won't ride to-day, so we shall save him from a fresh robbery. Be here"—here he looked at his watch—"in a quarter of an hour, and don't let us be seen together before that time. He'll be out of the weighing-room soon."

True enough Burke had arrived ten minutes before to ride the Glacier, by Young Snowdon, and was even now dressing under lock and key. He had a quick eye for a Continental bailiff and a *Rechtshandel*. He has already seen one on the road.

The previous race was over, and the Duc de Rougemont had already received the congratulations of his friends, in some cases a little uproarious, considering the delicacy of their toilettes. The bell had rung for saddling, and two of the steeple-chase horses were mounted and were being slowly paraded before the stand. At that moment a rush was apparent in the middle of the space allotted for weighing and mounting. A horse emerged from the crowd, which made way right and left, ridden by a powerful-looking man in orange and

purple belt, and went straight at the white railings which separates that spot from the course. The rails are about five feet high, but Glacier had jumped them with apparent ease, and turning round to the left was in a moment across the Iffetzheim road away to the forest.

"He's away, sir," said Bradhall. "That fellow of mine has frightened him. There are so many writs out, he doesn't suspect the true cause. He's half broken his wrist, too, with the butt of his whip. We must to horse and back to Baden. I know his haunt now. There's a hundred pounds reward out by this time. They're very slow with us in their justice, but they're very sure."

Long before Bradhall had finished his speech another horse was seen to leave the crowd; this time a gentleman's groom was the rider: and a burst of applause followed as he rushed Kosciusko at the rails, and landed safe on the other side. "Too fast for timber," said Charlie, who could not help admiring the performance, stunned as he was by the unexpected escape of Burke. Daly turned in his saddle. "A hundred pounds," shouted Bradhall, "and a free pardon;" but Daly was already out of hearing. The crowd watched the race from the platform till, imagining it to be a runaway gambler who was only leaving his creditors behind him, they turned their attention to the steeple-chase in hand, which could be no longer delayed for such a common occurrence as the escape of a defaulter.

"That arrives always in England," said the Baron de Champ Mars, turning to look at Mr. Rowlands on Medora and Mr. Burton on Bridegroom, who just then presented themselves.

About a hundred persons, however, swayed by interest or curiosity, ran to find their horses, amongst whom were Charlie, Mr. Bradhall, and his assistant. They were soon on the line, spread at a hopeless distance over the country; and Charlie most prudently followed the detective's advice—"The road, and to Baden. Keep him in view if possible." The foot of the hills was about eight miles distant, and for these Burke made, of course at his best pace. He had every advantage but one—weight. Glacier was in tip-top condition; Kosciusko was not fit to race. He had about a hundred yards' start; but he was riding thirteen stone (this was a Continental steeple-chase be it remembered,) Daly about eleven. He had also to judge the pace; for he could allow himself neither to be run up to nor to ride out the Glacier to a standstill. Onward they went,

Burke preserving the line, and not an apparent fence to stop them between the road and the forest. Daly continued to gain, but it was clear that he was pressing his horse, and as the country was deep, it must soon begin to tell. Burke, too, was evidently fearful of letting him come near; and so they rode through standing patches of corn, maize, and potatoes, at one time the distance lessening between them, at another increasing. It was clearly Daly's game to get on, especially as he could not hope to hold out against the condition of the other; and thus they sped onward, watched with an intensity of interest by three or four of their followers not known to the others, who soon began to fall off. Tom, who had followed his brother, came up.

"What's the matter, Charlie? Who the —— is the fellow?" And here he named a person whom I think quite as black as he is painted. Charlie scarcely heard, as he continued at a moderate gallop along the side of the road. "Is that horse thoroughbred that that groom of yours is riding?"

"Yes; by an English horse out of an Arab mare. He was bred in Hungary."

"That's lucky. By Jove he's gaining. No," said Tom, who was enjoying the race more as a matter of speculation than anything else—"No. I'll back the steeple-chaser for a hundred. But who is he, Charlie?"

Dissimulation is a mask which suffocates, but Mr. Bradhall occasionally let in the air through some breathing-holes, and he did so on this occasion. "There's a warrant out against him for forgery, to the tune of several thousand pounds, and there are suspicions of his being concerned in the murder of the late Mr. Thornhill many years ago, which you'll not recollect, maybe. It made a great stir at the time." They had been going for about seventeen minutes, and Tom sat down silently on his horse, and urged him to increased speed. At about this point, a road ran at right angles, or nearly so, to the one they were traversing, so that at the distance of a quarter of a mile it must be crossed by Burke and his pursuer. We have said that the country is here quite undivided by fences; but parallel to this road runs a dyke of enormous depth, half full of water, and banked up on both sides, perpendicularly, with rough-hewn stones. The width from side to side may be eighteen feet, and when the depth of the ground be considered, and the bad taken off, it is a most formidable jump for any horse. "Here's an end of it," said Charlie, "turn to the right; if Burke gets over it, it's a

certain fall for Kosciusko—most likely for both of them. They're nearly done now." On they came, and the band of pursuers were just within distance to see Burke urge his horse still faster as he came to the obstacle, confident in his horsemanship, and in the staying qualities of the Glacier, who to tell the truth, had plenty left in him yet. Kosciusko was but thirty or forty yards behind him, and Daly's own life, in a measure, depended on the capture of Burke. The danger of a fall was not even weighed in the balance. Burke's horse rose at the leap, but as he did so, his hind legs seemed to fail him, and he fell with his chest against the bank, throwing his rider into the road, and rolling back to the bottom of the water, where he was hopelessly struggling amongst weeds and mud. Had Daly taken time to see this, the capture of Burke was a certainty; but he did not until too late, and, unable to hold his horse, he too, came at the place. The horse, strange to say, cleared the dyke, but over-jumped himself, and fell with a crash on the other side on to poor Daly, who lay bruised and mangled without sense or motion. Not so Kosciusko, who rose at the instant, not much the worse for the fall; and when Charlie Thornhill reached the spot, he found the servant insensible, and Burke continuing his flight on his (Charlie's) horse.

To save a life is a higher duty than to take one, and the delay that naturally occurred in attention to Daly caused more loss of time. When the chase was resumed by Charlie and his brother, with Mr. Bradhall, it was clear that it was a hopeless case; and after riding two miles further in pursuit, they returned to Baden, happy in the assurance of the police that his escape was impossible. Charlie never cursed the goodness of his horses till that day; but as Kosciusko disappeared beneath Burke's weight, leaving the hacks hopelessly struggling after him, he sincerely wished he had been the sorriest brute in Germany. Daly was taken on to Baden, still insensible, apparently dying, though not yet dead. Burke entered the forest with an idea that he had outwitted a bailliff's man, and only wondering how such a fellow came by so good a horse, which rivalled the best of his own Irish career. About fifteen years of immunity from punishment make a man wonderfully sanguine, not to say forgetful of his dues.

It was days before any gleam of intelligence lighted up the features of the wounded man. Internal injury, and the severe shock to the system, which resulted from a pressure on the spine received in his fall, forbade any hope of permanent amendment,

Strange decrees of Providence ! here in an effort to make reparation for the great crime of his life, Daly met with his punishment, and his accomplice was the unwitting instrument of its infliction. Naturally, the common idea connected with retribution is proximity to the offence. Chastisement is regarded by most men as a sequence or consequence of crime. It is so ; but not an immediate one. Daly's present pain and possible loss of life arose entirely from the circumstances of his original connection with Burke, and, as we shall see, by his own dishonest and vagabond existence. It turned out, indeed, that the magnitude of the guilt in which he had unintentionally involved himself acted afterwards as a check upon him ; and some natural feelings common to many, and not the least so to his countrymen (feelings of a heavy debt or obligation, which he was willing to pay in his own coin by instalments, and as occasion offered, without inconvenience to himself), kept him from pursuing the path on which he had entered. If anyone had suggested to him that hanging by public execution, or penal servitude for life, was the proper recompense, it would have shocked his sense of independent action. When first an opportunity presented itself of helping one of the name of Thornhill, his argument was quite a natural one, and was strong enough to enlist his friend Gipsy George, the illegitimate son of Kildonald, in his favour. "Faix, it's lucky we wasn't found out, or we'd be at some Bothany Bay or Portland Island, or some o' them far-off places now, and maybe Mister Thornhill 'ud never have had his dog again. What good 'ull we be to him if we was just hanged or thransported ?" and thus he philosophically acquiesced in the decrees of Providence. When his reason returned, however, like more literate and wiser persons, he began to wonder why he should be punished just as he was engaged in the last act for the establishment of truth, and at the very time he had made up his mind to make a clean breast of it, come what might. It did not occur to him that, although he had been paying his debts in his own way, at his own leisure, and very much to his own satisfaction, the mortgage was liable to be called in at once. But so it is, and so it was with him ; and as he had grown to think himself rather generous in his resolutions of amendment, he was taken aback by the compulsory demand which just retribution had made upon him. If his mode of reasoning for years had been eccentric, and his method of acting up to his convictions peculiar, it must be remembered that he was an Irishman : a recollection which covers a

multitude of peculiarities, and which may account rationally for his having almost regarded himself at last as the tutelary deity of the house of Thornhill.

Meanwhile, Kosciusko had returned to his stable, and, what is more to the purpose, Burke had been taken. In a lonely house, not far from one of the wildest spots in that part of the Black Forest, he was found on the night of his escape. The place is more the natural formation of a rock in a dark precipice overhanging the valley of the Mourg, not many miles from Eberstein. It had long been the resort of evil-doers, and was held by the remnant of a gang of coiners when Burke sought shelter amongst them. His foreign manners and language were displeasing to them; the violence of his temper, assumption of superiority, and open daring, so different from their own low cunning and desire of concealment, that, like the hunted deer, they left him to his fate. On his return to the place he found no one; and it is believed that the reward offered for his capture tempted one of the gang to betray him.

Burke was physically a bold man. When the *Gerichts-diener* or Process-server appeared at the door of his temporary quarters, he speculated upon how far resistance might serve him. Foreign prisons are proverbially unpleasant. "How much for?" said he, folding his arms coolly, in a rough coat which he had assumed over his jockey dress; "what's the money?"

"It's not money, Herr Engländer." Here Burke drew a pistol: the German functionary drew back, and Burke advanced. At the same moment, our old acquaintance, as we first saw him, Mr. Bradhall, and his aide-de-camp, presented themselves.

"No, sir: it's a case of forgery and murder of Geoffrey Thornhill, Esq., late of Thornhills, in the county of ——." Burke's hand dropped, and his whole appearance at once underwent a change. Mr. Bradhall improved the opportunity to secure him.

"Forgery? murder?" said, or rather stammered he. "You'll be troubled, I'm thinking, to find evidence of such a charge."

"Phelim O'Brian," said Bradhall to that worthy, who appeared in the doorway; "is that our prisoner?"

"No other," said he. "Faix, Misther Burke, it's thrue; and the papers, wid the names an' all, Kildonald and Thornhill, and the title deeds, is all in the hands o' the lawyers, bad luck to them."

"And you have done this, Phelim O'Brian: you, that I

brought up ever since you was a child ; who ate, and drank, and was clothed by me ; who'd have wanted bread but for the man you've thravell'd hundreds of miles to destroy. Why have ye done this thing, Phelim ? ”

“ And tell me, Mr. Burke, where is Mary Connor ? Could no other serve your dainty taste, but the girl that I loved and that loved me, and that would have made a home for me when I was old, and worn, and broken ; that would have shared my lot ; ay, that would have changed it ?—who would have made the bitter sweet and hard usage soft ; and taught me to bless you and all the world, instead of to curse them ? ”

“ You fool ! ” said Burke, with the rage of a chained tiger ; “ you fool ; Mary Connor ! it was Kildonald, not I ; and her children are alive to thank you for money you have taken from them to put into the pockets of Thornhill. Those papers which were stolen by you or your accomplices, those are the receipts of the purchase-money from Geoffrey Thornhill. ”

It was true enough ; the purchase money had been received by Burke, and he had afterwards become possessed of the receipts he had himself given. From that period he had treated the estate as his own. And having been employed by both sides to expedite matters, he had used both for his own purpose. Kildonald had been fain to accept certain sums of money, as the price of his property, which by forgery at his death had been made to appear more. The appropriated rents of the Kildonald estate during the brief span of Thornhill's life had never found their way further than the coffers of Burke.

It was necessary at last to take Daly's depositions on oath. It became apparent to all that he could not survive the internal injuries he had received. The necessary authorities were therefore brought together, and the substance of what may be called his confession was as follows.

On the day of Bidborough Races, 18—, memorable by the death of Geoffrey Thornhill, Daly, *alias* Heenan, *alias* Donovan, had been induced by Burke, to whom he was under pecuniary obligations, and in whose power he was by various undiscovered misdemeanours, to assist in robbing Kildonald on his way home. Having ascertained where he would dine and where he would sleep, which was not difficult by his friend Burke after his quarrel with Thornhill, the scheme was concocted. George, known in the country as Gipsy George, or the Handsome Gipsy, was a son of Kildonald by a woman called Mary Connor. The indignities

and cruelty with which he and his mother had been treated made him a willing assistant in the design, and there can be no doubt he intended to have killed his reputed father, had he fallen in with him. Patiently waiting, therefore, under the dark firs, on the heath where I have stated the murder to have taken place, they at length heard the sound of a horse's feet. They hastily threw across the road a strong rope. The descent between the dark box and firs, where we last parted with Geoffrey Thornhill, was exceedingly steep: he was riding with the reins on his horse's neck, and in a moment he was down. Daly and George rushed forward, and a blow from the latter stretched him upon the ground. It was no sooner struck, however, than the men discovered their mistake, and would at once have made their escape. Two things prevented this consummation—the sudden revival of Thornhill, who was only stunned, and the appearance of Burke himself upon the field of action. Thornhill had seized Daly, while George stood aloof, uncertain how to act; and the struggles of Daly were quite in vain to extricate himself from so powerful a man. Fearful of losing his prey, masked and dressed so as to defy detection, as he thought, and still imagining that it was Kildonald whom he saw struggling, Burke rushed to the rescue. Seeing a fresh assailant, Thornhill loosed his hold of the passive, and closed with the active opponent. The struggle was severe—both powerful men and in the prime of life—but the violent blow, and the blood which trickled from the wounded temple began to tell, and Burke's vigorous efforts were gradually gaining the mastery. At that moment the moon shone out, and the mask was torn rudely from his face.

"Burke!" said Thornhill. "Good God! is it possible? Now I know you." The words were his last; the eyes of Burke met the gleam of George's pistol barrel as it lay on the ground, and, seizing it, he shot the unfortunate man through the head. "Och! will I ever forget it, though it took less time to do than to tell it!" sobbed Daly.

"And what's become of Gipsy George, as you call him?"

"Wasn't he killed by Mr. Thornhill's horse the night when he went to hand the prisoners over to the police, yer honour? Them's his papers in the little box I carries about wid me."

Such was the sum and substance of the deposition of Michael Daly. The papers found in the box were, besides, perfectly confirmatory of those which were already in the hands of Sir

Frederick Marston and his lawyer, and established, beyond all doubt, the right of the Thornhills to the Kildonald estate, with no end of arrears of rent, which it was quite impossible to get. Within a week Daly was no more.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE BROTHERS FARED APART.

“*Intervalla vides humanè commoda.*”—HOR. *Sat.*

Reader. Will you do me the favour to explain one or two inconsistencies?

Author. I dislike explanations ; but we have travelled so far on such good terms that I'll do my best.

Reader. Why in the world didn't Daly tell all this before ? It would have been easy to have done so.

Author. Undoubtedly it would ; but it is not my business to penetrate motives, especially those of an Irishman : merely to state facts. I think Daly acted in the most natural manner possible. It takes a man a long time to acknowledge his passive participation in a murder : besides, when the first brush is over, and the pursuit less keen, there is more time for reflection.

Reader. Then why did he confess at all ?

Author. Because, while time and circumstances took him further from fear of punishment, they brought him nearer to fear of God. Teach a man that he is not utterly worthless, and you make him better. Show him that he has sympathies with his fellow-creatures, and you bring him in closer alliance with his Maker. Society had been kinder to him of late, and he felt an obligation to society. Besides, all men have some natural feelings, which require only the proper chord to be touched to respond. Charlie Thornhill's kindness of manner and honesty of purpose had done this. Had he been other than he was, Daly might long have felt the obligation without much inclination to act up to its demands. There was another reason, not so good a one, but still powerful—his dislike to Burke, who was selfish, and had pressed his point unmitigatedly, where Daly now saw that his own ignorance had been imposed upon. Burke had

always persisted in an equal participation in the murder by George and Daly ; and they had feared, with reason, that the punishment would have been the same. Time, as I have said, shook this belief, and produced its fruits in a confession.

Reader. And now of course you mean to give us a trial, and bring us suborned witnesses, and enter into legal subtleties, and all that sort of thing ; because that's the most interesting part : the women like it best.

Author. Naturally ; because they understand it least. It's just that law that I dread most. Good law must be paid for, it's very expensive. Bad law, which I could easily get from my acquaintances who are fond of pool and grilled bones on circuit, is open to criticism ; and though I am well able to bear a buffeting on my own account, I don't like it for other peoples' mistakes. I therefore tell you at once that Burke was taken to prison, and on the morning that he was to have been tried he was found hanged in his cell, having accomplished that end with considerable ingenuity by means of the sheets of his bed. He would scarcely have been convicted of the murder, though he would have ended his life in penal servitude for his forgeries, which were easy of proof. The betting-book, which was returned to Sir Frederick Marston by coach, had come from Burke, and was given by him to Daly's brother, known to us as Donovan, who died at Marston after some very incoherent disclosures. The lovers of a sensation regarded the suicide of Burke as a severe national disappointment. The friends of the Thornhills and the family themselves regarded it, after all Charlie's efforts to discover the murderer, as a merciful dispensation of Providence.

Within one month of the events detailed in our last chapter, Charles Thornhill was summoned from Frankfort to take his place in the house of Messrs. Mint, Chalkstone, Palmer, and Co., of East Goldbury, City, London. He came, was kindly received by Roger Palmer and his partners, and installed in a small corner railed and curtained off for the privacy of foreign correspondents especially. He found Roger Palmer unaltered ; and he did his utmost by dining in—Harley Street, let us say—to cheer the solitude of his benefactor. It was not long before he succeeded so far that the old man was never happy without him. "I don't ask you, Thornhill, to give up your chambers to come and live with me : it might be irksome to you ; it would be to any young man of your connections and habits ; but if

ever you have an hour to spend, or if ever you want a change, remember your father's old friend in Harley Street."

"You've taken care that I shall not forget you, sir ; and if you are alone, and it gives you pleasure, I shall be very happy to come to-day,"

It was a very curious thing to see the friendship or attachment between these two men.

The one was small, shrivelled, nervous, with closely compressed lips and delicate features, afraid of cold or wind, timid, distrustful, penurious, and wealthy. The other tall, active, handsome, with an air of fashion and independence which sat nobly on him ; homely, honest, indifferent to money except for what it purchased, despising luxury for himself, but always enjoying it as belonging to his order when it came in his way ; fearing nothing, hoping everything, and living on his labour from hand to mouth. As they walked into Oxford Street, or along Bond Street, together, they were an extraordinary couple ; and still more so as they went to East Goldbury in a cab, huddled side by side, his share of which Charlie most scrupulously paid. The fact is, they were of use to one another, and they felt it ; and men usually love what they imagine they can protect.

When Charlie went to London the Dacres had resumed their journey to Italy. No change for the better appeared in Alice Dacre, and it was desirable that she should have different air from her own. Need I say that Mr. Dacre could not withhold his consent to Edith's engagement with Charlie, though the consent was saddled with some conditions as regards time. What cared they for time ? So Edith went to nurse her sister, with a heavy heart, from the Black Forest ; and Charlie went to visit his brother Tom.

"I hear you were lucky again last night, Tom," said Charlie, as he took up a cigar, and lighted it. He seemed in unusually good spirits, which was not common with him. He was the most equable man alive, was Charlie Thornhill.

"I was, Charlie. Those fools outside (don't you see 'em ?), De Rougemont, and Carlingford, and half a dozen more, would give anything for my luck, and I'm so miserable that—that—d——it, Charlie ; I beg your pardon, old fellow, but I can't help it." Tom was fairly choking.

"Give up play, Tom," said Charlie, bluntly ; "it don't agree with you."

"I wish I could. I could give up the money, but I can't give

up the play." Tom took a turn up the room, and poured out a glass of sherry.

"Leave this place, Tom ; it's depressing and enervating to a degree."

"Such a life as mine, worthless, useless, with all I feel in me that might have been better, would be so anywhere."

"Don't speak so, Tom ; but give it up. Leave this place, at all events. Go to England. Anything but this Continental life. I'm going to England next week. Get half a dozen horses, and go down to Thornhills."

"Ah ! Charlie, you don't know what it is. I can't live at Thornhills. I can't keep half a dozen horses—at least, I can't ride them. There is but one thing that keeps me from thinking of—of—her, and that's play."

Charlie's eyes opened to their fullest extent : in his modesty he could have feared for himself, but what woman could have been cruel to Tom ? The thing seemed impossible. Yet who was the "she" that had evidently turned her back upon the finest fellow in the world ? He allowed himself to run over these facts in a few moments, and then he walked straight up to Tom. He was the taller of the two, not the handsomer ; but it would have been difficult to find two more perfect specimens of the high-bred Englishman in their peculiar style. Putting his arm affectionately over Tom's shoulder, and looking cheerfully at him, he said, "If it's only a woman, cheer up, Tom. Look at me ; Edith Dacre has accepted me. I'm engaged to be married to her. I came to tell you this before I go to Frankfort."

Tom Thornhill took his brother's hand. "Thank God for that bit of good news ! How selfish I must have been never to have seen it."

"Tom," said Charlie, suddenly brightening, "go and marry Alice Dacre ; she's the best and handsomest girl I ever saw, except, except—you know."

Tom's face grew paler ; he bit his nether lip ; and then with an effort he said, "She is the woman, Charlie, the woman who has twice refused me. I thought it was her mother, or her father, but this time there was no mistake. But it's over ; and at the end of the week I shall go God knows where ; it don't much matter. I hear they winter in Florence ; so that I shall go to Spain or the south of France." The conversation continued on other matters ; and when they parted the next day, it was years before they met again.

Charlie's life was now monotonous enough. The Dacres were in Florence. The accounts of Alice's failing health came constantly to Charlie in regular letters from Edith. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston were in Town, and as the spring advanced, many of his old acquaintances reappeared. None appeared more pleased with Charlie Thornhill's improved prospects than Lady Montague Mastodon. "Not such a fool, after all," said her ladyship. "As to his brother, I believe, if there were many such spendthrifts, the Jews would be eventually ruined, and driven to honest employment by sheer force of poverty."

The summer advanced. Alice Dacre could now be moved : they were going out of Florence : but the letters spoke of no improvement. In the autumn Charlie went down to his mother. Tom's difficulties were serious ; he himself was gone to the East ; an occasional letter to his mother spoke only of his excursions here and there ; it never touched the subject which Charlie knew to be nearest his brother's heart ; and he himself was religiously silent. He, too, heard from his brother, but it was entirely business, and of a painful nature. Must Thornhills be sold ? that was the question. "Apparently," said Mr. Mason, the family solicitor, "it must ; but it could be held on another year, and an eligible tenant perhaps found." Poor Mrs. Thornhill and Mary Stanhope ! what a change. Of course they must have moved if Tom had brought a wife ; but how differently. "Oh ! what a blessing he might have been to us, Mary, had he but married well !"

"You don't seem to think of his wife, Emily. She might have been in our place now. We're like the cats. It's only a change of locality for us. I suppose we shall find mice everywhere."

The reader must excuse our shifting our ground occasionally. We hope he may find mice everywhere.

Tom Thornhill was lounging on the walls at Malta one lovely evening in the waning autumn, just twelve months after our last meeting with him. Since that time he had been wandering from capital to capital, wherever excitement, above all, the excitement of play, was to be met with. He watched the dark blue sea as he smoked his cigar, and his thoughts wandered back to long years gone by. In many cases this is an enervating process. It is so when the prospect in front presents enterprise and difficulty, but it is the reverse when all before us is a land barren of good, and stretching hopelessly on in the luxury and indolence

of an Eastern landscape. Then, to look back, and see how hopeless and aimless has been our career is more honest, more hopeful than to close our eyes to it.

In Tom's case it was better that he should look back. He had forgotten the true end of existence, Duty, in looking forward only to the false end, Pleasure. He saw a picture, as he turned his face from the sinking sun of his prosperity to the coming darkness of adversity. He saw his home afar off, and its manifold obligations. He saw his mother, in advancing age, yearning for her elder and best-loved son. He saw his brother, successfully struggling with adversity, and making for himself the place that he had taken by right. He saw a loved and loving girl, wearied and brokenhearted, who had refused to link her fate and her family with a spendthrift and a gambler. He knew she loved him. He knew the offers she had cast aside, with one hope to cling to. And he now knew how he loved her. He felt the unsatisfied craving of a heart by nature noble, generous, true, but which had been turned from its course by selfish infirmities and unwholesome vanities. Was it too late? Three times? And what were his hopes? Only in utter self-reprobatation: in consistent change. But there needs proof of it. Time. Months, or years perhaps. She shall have it; the latter, if need be, and a life of devotion afterwards.

At that moment, on the other side of an angle of the wall against which he was leaning he heard voices. They were some officers, smoking and enjoying the still night, like himself.

"Beautiful: I never saw such a beautiful girl. Dacre was very fond of her." Tom's ears opened at the name. "When did she die?" Naturally Tom felt a little interest in the lady who had captivated a Dacre.

"On the eighteenth, I think. I saw it in 'Galignani' on the mess-table this afternoon. Do you recollect her, Dixon?"

"Of course I do. Her father was very civil to us. Poor girl! What lovely hair she had!" Tom listened still. His heart beat at the mention of the peculiarity. "What did it say in the paper; anything about her?"

"No, not a word. Merely, on the eighteenth, Alice something Dacre; I forget what the second name was. I'm very sorry for Teddy: his favourite sister."

Tom heard no more, or the voices ceased. His head fell between his hands on the parapet of the wall, by which he was standing, and every sensation but one of dull and heavy pain

left him. For upwards of an hour he remained in this state. He returned to his hotel.

"Waiter, find me the 'Galignani.'" True enough, it was there. "On the 18th of May, Alice Carrington Dacre——." He read no more : the paper dropped from his hand, and he sought his room, blinded with tears.

In the meantime Charlie continued to prosper. Everything that was in his hand turned out well. Roger Palmer liked Charlie for himself, so did his partners, but they liked prosperity also. His regular business-like habits were very useful as an example to the house. He was at the bank first, he left it last. Neither was he without his pleasures in the midst of business. He kept his one modest hack, though his income was now become a good one for a single man. He had plenty of society at the West End of Town. Lady Marston would have given him a home, but his mother was in Town for a time, and she had a prior claim. How the two women sorrowed over Tom, to Charlie's intense delight ! How they loved him ! "Why doesn't he write oftener ?" said his mother. "And when he does write, why doesn't he say more about himself ?" Charlie had his surmises, but he kept them to himself. They sat comfortably at breakfast in Grosvenor Place.

"When are the Dacres coming home, Charlie ?"

"At the beginning of next season," said he.

"And then we shall lose you, I suppose ?" rejoined Mrs. Thornhill, with a little, a very little petulance.

"Never, my dear mother, if you mean by my marriage. Perhaps it won't be so soon ; and whenever it is, you'll gain Edith, and lose nothing."

Mrs. Thornhill did not seem convinced. "Where are you going to-morrow ?"

"To Harley Street. Roger Palmer has been ill ; not exactly ill, but unwell : and I promised to go to dinner to-morrow. To-morrow's Sunday ; so I shall dine with him, my dear mother, if you and Aunt Mary have no objection."

Aunt Mary certainly had none ; so he went to the stables, which were behind the house, and mounting his hack, rode quietly to the City.

There was a comfortable room kept for Charlie to dress in at Roger Palmer's, and about half-past six on this said Sunday, Charles Thornhill completed his toilet to his own satisfaction.

The dinner to which they sat down was as simple as it

possibly could be ; well cooked and well put upon the table, but of most ordinary kind. One thing was remarkable in a man of Mr. Palmer's habits of economy—the excellence of the wines ; still these were of the ordinary sorts at all times. Indeed, he entertained rarely and sparingly ; for Roger Palmer was cynical as well as parsimonious.

"You like that port wine, my dear Thornhill?" said the old man, drawing up his chair to the side of the table, and sitting with his back to the light.

"Very much indeed," replied Charlie. "I never have drunk any so good."

"No ! port wine cannot be bought, nor made : it can only be kept. That wine's worth, let me see—yes—two guineas a bottle : if it were in the market."

"Have you much of it?" said Charlie.

"Yes : plenty. But why do you ask?"

"I beg your pardon, really—but— Well, sir, you never drink it yourself ; why not put in the market?"

"Perhaps my heir might like it, Master Charles." The old man's eyes twinkled, and his ordinary mode of address was exchanged for something more familiar. He helped himself to some old Madeira, and pushed the bottle of port over to Charlie. The people were coming out from evening service as he did so.

"Do you know what happened yesterday afternoon in Pall Mall?"

"Nothing remarkable, that I'm aware of."

"It is thought very remarkable : at least it will be sufficiently startling to some people to-morrow morning. Your uncle's partner, George Hammerton, died suddenly yesterday evening."

"Suddenly !" repeated Charlie after him, as a host of recollections came at once to his mind. "Was it suddenly? What age was he?"

"Quite suddenly—not very old ; about sixty-seven or eight. Do you know how far you are interested in this event?"

"To a certain extent, I do know ; but you and Sir Frederick Marston are the persons to whom I am directed by my Uncle Henry's last instructions to apply, as capable of giving me an explanation."

"Marston is not precisely a man of business ; and if you like, I believe I can place the matter very clearly before you." The old man looked thoughtful and anxious, but there was

rather a triumphant tone in his manner which jarred with his words. "Have you cherished any expectations from your uncle since his death? Answer me, if you will, as a friend."

"I have half guessed the possibility of the time coming when there might be something ; but I have regarded it as a remote contingency."

"You did well, my dear boy, you did well. I have been this afternoon with poor Hammerton's brother, who is in Greenland's house ; he declines all responsibility, and the bank will not open on Monday morning. I cannot advise my partners to undertake it ; though I think the speculation might be a good one as regards connection. There is a West End house that is likely to do so, so that every shilling in the pound will be paid ; but, beyond that, there is not money to bury him."

Charlie's face fell, as what man's would not? He had told Roger Palmer the truth, he had counted on nothing ; yet he had sometimes thought that a few thousands only out of that business might have smoothed the way for his marriage, or have given a few more of its comforts to his Edith. Roger Palmer's face, however, wore no such sympathetic expression as might have been expected.

"And there was no will?"

"No will, but a sort of trust deed in my hands, to be used in your favour, as far as Henry Thornhill's interest in that house could be so, at Mr. Hammerton's death. Had your uncle or Mr. Hammerton lived a few years longer, you might have been a rich man ; but God has willed it otherwise."

"Then, sir, we must manage as well as we can without. And now, will you give me the explanation you promised."

"I will. Some few years after your uncle bought, with his younger brother's portion, a share in Hammerton's bank, a terrible crisis arrived, which ruined half the bankers in England. Indian affairs were the origin of the panic, and the extent to which speculation had been carried in that country. Few remained firm ; and by one house alone your uncle lost 200,000*l*. I need hardly say that it takes a long time to get that back. Assistance from private sources was all they could hope for, as the trade was too much crippled to do much for one another. Since that day your uncle and Hammerton have never been solvent ; but their business was so good that a few years would have made them so. A private meeting was called, of which I formed one, to consult on the advisability of closing the

house, to the certain ruin of hundreds, or of going on with every prospect of paying twenty shillings in the pound, and saving their own reputation. The latter was determined upon, and to-morrow morning every one will be paid in full, but Hammerton's will have ceased to exist for ever." The old man drew a long and deep sigh, as if an old and familiar friend had disappointed him by dying, and then finished his Madeira in silence.

"Shall I ring for the lamp?" asked Charlie, the twilight having deepened perceptibly during the explanation."

"Not yet, Charles Thornhill. I've a word more to say. Do you know that Thornhills is in the market still?"

"I do: an order was forwarded by my brother last year from Malta to have it disposed of, at a price, just as we had persuaded him not to sell it, but to let us find a tenant for it, if possible. We have not yet had a customer: I hardly think we have honestly tried."

"Do you know the price, and the conditions of sale?"

"No; but they can easily be had from our man of business, Mr. Mason."

"I do," said Roger Palmer—"75,000*l.*, the timber at a valuation. How long has it been in your family? Help yourself, my dear Thornhill."

"Since 1672." Charlie sighed a most genuine sigh of regret.

"Would it do for me?"

"It's a larger place than you would care to live in, but very beautiful."

"Perhaps my heir might like that as well as the port wine." The old man seemed mightily tickled by the joke, considering it was not so pleasant a subject to Charlie.

"I should be very happy to think that she did. She's one of the kindest and best wives or mothers I ever heard of."

In one moment Roger Palmer was on his legs: it was something too dark to see his face, which was whiter than ever with surprise: in his sudden rise he upset his own wine, and half spilt the glass to which Charlie had so lately helped himself.

"She?—she?" said the old man, almost shouting till the room rang again. "Who told you it was a she? Where did you learn such a story? I see: from your Uncle Henry. And how do you know anything about her?"

"It was my Uncle Henry, I think, or perhaps Lady Marston.

But I saw them at Frankfort, struggling against poverty and sickness ; and I'm only glad you have the means of rescuing a good woman and her daughter from their stings."

I think that bottle of port must have done something for Charlie.

"No, Charles Thornhill, never ! It's not Kildonald, who stole her from me, shall have my money. She liked him, loved him, better than the hands that had worked for her, and the bosom that had warmed her ; she made her own bed, let her lie on it."

The old man spoke very cruelly, and Charlie interrupted him : "But, Mr. Palmer, you forget——"

"I forget nothing : it is because I can't forget. Not a word more, Charles, my boy. You, sir, you are my heir. You shall have Thornhills, and thousands and thousands besides." The old man resumed his seat, and as he drank off a fresh glass of Madeira he became quieter. "There, ring the bell, Thornhill, for the lamp. We're in darkness, groping our way ; let's have some light upon it." Charlie did so, and the light came.

The declaration of the miser had so astonished him that he sat for some minutes unable to say a word, even of thanks, much less of repudiation. Images of all sorts flocked into his mind, and bewildered him. He thought there was something he ought to do, but it wanted a struggle to do it. At length Roger Palmer spoke again :

"The thing is already done, I've made you my heir. I owe all I have to your father. He saved the whole house from ruin and myself from beggary and disgrace. Now, will you have Thornhills, or shall I try some more tempting investment for you ?"

"My dear sir," said Charlie, rising, with the tears in his eyes, and walking towards Roger Palmer, "I need hardly tell you what you have done for me. If there is anything in the world I can do for you to give you pleasure but this, tell me. But I can't take Thornhills ; there's something tells me I can't. And then, think of poor Tom."

"I have thought of Tom, more than he ever thought for himself ; but don't say no : not to-night. You owe me something. Repay it by an act of obedience. Be my son. I never had one ; but I could have wished him like you."

"You overpower me, sir ; indeed you do. There are many considerations. Give me time. The temptation you put before me is too great."

"Then take time, boy; this day week. In the meantime make Mason promise me the refusal of the estate. Good-night. God bless you."

Charlie went out into the clear, warm night. He lit a cigar: and as he walked to Grosvenor Place he had plenty to think of.

It was at the end of the season. The House was tired out; the eloquence of Gladstone and the satire of Horsman failed to attract attention. The last *déjeûner* had been given at Richmond, the last dinner at Blackwall. Lumley had closed his house, and Rachel was gone back to Paris. Even the clerks in Goldbury were going up and down to Broadstairs and Margate; and the grouse on a hundred hills were counting the hours of their probable existence. Sir Frederick and Lady Marston were taking their last dinner previous to turning their backs upon drought and solitude, made manifest by the half-dozen carriages that still remained in town. He was in better spirits than usual, as he led his wife down stairs apologising for his want of punctuality.

"The fact is, my dear, I have been detained on rather pressing business by old Roger Palmer, of whom you've heard."

"And whom I have seen, Fred. And what had he to say?"

"That Thornhills was sold at last."

"To whom, if it's not an impertinent question, Fred?"

"He's bought it himself."

"It's somewhat large for his wants. Does he mean to live there?"

"It's not for himself; he has already made a present of it to another."

"To our friend Charlie? I thought you told me he steadily refused to accept it." Lady Marston seemed less astonished than she ought to have been.

"Excepting upon conditions: with which Roger Palmer has complied."

"And they are?"

"An allowance to the Kildonalds, which shall place them in comfortable circumstances; and a legacy of 20,000*l.* at his death. It was all he could manage to do for them; the old man would do no more."

"And Tom Thornhill?"

"Wrote a week ago a letter, such as few men but himself could write, urging, praying, his acceptance of the generous provision, and declaring it the only means by which he could be

relieved from the constant and unavailing regrets for the disappointments he had brought on them all."

"And Roger Palmer himself, is he going to die?" said the lady, smiling.

"Not of starvation, certainly; for there's a handsome annuity payable out of the estate to him, more than adequate to all his wants."

"And do you approve of all this, Frederick?"

Sir Frederick looked up from his plate, and saw so bright a twinkle in his lady's eyes, and so absolute an absence of all astonishment, that he began to feel a little disappointed.

"Why! Kate——"

"My dear."

"You knew of this before?"

"I've heard a little about it, certainly. Charlie was here the day before yesterday; he came to see you; and he couldn't help saying something about it to me. He was in terrible distress: and—I hope you are not jealous, but you know you never are at home, so—I—just—ventured to—advise."

"My love," said the baronet, walking solemnly round the table, and stooping to kiss the tears from his wife's eyes, which began fairly to run over, "I knew how honest and generous and good you were, but I never knew what a counsellor I had so near home, or I might have saved myself many a weary hour. When I want to know how to do right, Kate, I shall come to you."

When Sir Frederick and Lady Marston read Tom's last letter over, one expression much perplexed them. "I never knew," he wrote, "until she was gone, how much I could do for her memory which I failed to do for herself. My life is passed in retirement. And from the day that the fatal announcement met my eye I have lived on the consolation that if she saw me now she would have no cause to blush for her unworthy preference."

The following spring the Dacres returned to England. Their first visitor was Charlie. He met them in Paris, and returned to London with them. They had but little to learn of his improved fortunes, as Charles Thornhill was too glad to communicate his happiness to trust to surprises. When Edith Dacre walked down the steps of St. George's, Hanover Square, a happy bride, she had known for some few months that Thornhills was to be her home.

"Well!" said Lady Montague Mastodon, looking at the bridegroom, as he stuttered and stammered his acknowledgments, "a man may not know the difference between Niger and Nigger, and yet get through the world remarkably well. He's not the Dunce of the Family."

CHAPTER LL

CONCLUSION.

"*Exeunt omnes.*"—*Old Play.*

WE have very nearly finished. Indeed, to have landed our hero and his bride safely in the family domain, and to have shuffled off his brother to Alexandria or Cairo seems to be about as much as the most exacting could require. It was from the former of those places that Tom's last letters were dated; and for the next three years he was only heard of at long intervals. He spoke of returning to England for a time, and looking forward to catching a glimpse of his brother's happiness, which was now complete. That gentleman, indeed, seemed to be made for enjoyment; and when Mrs. Charles Thornhill presented him with a son and heir his exultation was far beyond all proportion to the event. He had his troubles, however. He was very desirous of exchanging the cares of a banking-house and the onerous duties of a foreign correspondence for the responsibilities of a country gentleman. There ought to be a resident landlord at Thornhills, and the estate and his little additions to it would well support it. Besides, London was not to his taste. There was one claim, however, greater than those of Thornhills and his own inclinations—that of Roger Palmer; and for the old man to have seen his *protégé* turning back from the golden furrows in which he was ploughing would have broken his heart. While therefore he rented a small house in Belgravia, he contented himself with running backwards and forwards as often as time would permit.

"Some day," thought he, "we shall all find ourselves at Thornhills again. Let my mother have it till then; and we must be her guests. His wife was more beautiful than ever; marriage had wonderfully improved her, as it does most people.

It strengthens the weak, confirms the unstable, softens asperities, and teaches us to bear and forbear. It is an universal panacea, the offspring of affection and hope, and the parent of perpetual sunshine and self-denial.

At length Tom Thornhill was heard of, and in a way that few could have conceived possible. About the beginning of the third summer after Charlie's marriage a book appeared in London on the drawing-room table of most persons who have any regard for their reputations as to literature. It was not light literature, and yet it was as fit for a drawing-room table as elsewhere. It was not a religious book. It neither dealt in polemical divinity nor abstruse speculation; yet there was a tone of seriousness running through it which told of deeper thoughts than those which usually force themselves to the surface on the streams of fashionable society. It was not cheerless, nor egotistical, but it was easy to detect a wound unhealed through the flimsy veil of adventure which the writer had thrown over it. At all events, "Uranothern" obtained a deserved and decided success, and men of learning and research, as well as women of taste and education, united in unqualified admiration of the author. And this was Tom Thornhill. And everybody read it. Those who did not know him were delighted; those who did scarcely believed their senses. The Marstons read it, and the Mastodons; the Robinson Browns, and the Dacres. It was read in fine bindings, in one volume, in three, in railway stations, and in Elizabethan parsonages, and always with something of approbation and sympathy. The East is a favourite subject with most men; and there was then much untrodden ground which required a delicate and trembling foot to traverse it. And there was one who read it, and who dropped tears of genuine love and sympathy and pity, and in all her own regrets felt happier that he was learning to forget them.

It was a beautiful winter's morning after Christmas, and Charlie and his wife were at Thornhills. There was no one with them but his mother and Mary Stanhope; and as the hounds were meeting at the bottom of one of his own covers, about three miles distant, he desired his groom to take his horses on, as Mrs. Charles Thornhill would take him to cover in the carriage. In a few minutes Edith arrived, ready to give the squire his breakfast, and ignorant of the new arrangement made for her. To a stranger she had the happy, joyous smile

of early womanhood, though she led her second child, a little girl of two years old or more, by the hand: to an old acquaintance she had gained in loveliness by the loss of that over-buoyant joyousness for which she was so remarkable some years before.

"You'll have to put your bonnet on, Edith, after breakfast: I've ordered the carriage for you." Charlie was buckling on his spur as he spoke.

"There goes my favourite ottoman. Do look, Charlie, your spur has caught the work, and almost pulled out the child's eye."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, dear. It will easily sew up with a bit of brown silk."

"It's not so easy to sew up, as you call it, with brown silk. Look, sir, at the mischief you have done."

Charlie picked up the baby, for the time being, who was staring with open eyes, and wondering whether mamma and papa were really quarrelling, as she and brother Geoffrey did occasionally.

"How sorry I am: now for the breakfast. Where's the mother, Edith, and the rest of the royal family? Don't forget that you have to dress."

"Why didn't you tell me that upstairs. I shall have to alter my hair."

"Then I certainly wouldn't do that," said Charlie, laughing at his wife's excuses; "and I'll ring and tell them to saddle my hack."

"What! are you going to cover in the carriage?" The whole manner was changed: alacrity and good humour and a blush that might have sat on a maiden cheek lighted up his wife's face as he said—

"Of course I am, if you and——"

"Oh, charming! There's your tea. We shan't be a minute." The door opened again and again, and in a few minutes the family party were busily engaged at breakfast.

The fact is that "dear Edith" was a little disappointed. There had been a discussion in the dressing-room as to the propriety of her riding on horseback to the meet. Charlie had put a prudential and very decided negative upon it; and, although the most indulgent of husbands, when he made up his mind that he was right, he usually stuck to it.

The cover near which the hounds met was a hanging wood, with the river running rapidly below it. An open country, of a

most formidable character to cross, stretched away in deep grass meadows on the opposite side. In fact it was *the vale par excellence* of that part of England ; and we all know what that means. Heavy galloping, rasping ox-fences, and water, on its way to the never-ending streams of ocean. It was a fortunate circumstance that foxes were not fond of facing the river ; as a rule they broke up hill, or threaded the side of the stream without crossing. I say fortunate, not because I object to the excitement of a stiff vale, but because a stranger in that country, as I am, not knowing the exact spot to hit the ford—and there was but one just about Thorneycrofts—would be pretty certain to see the run from the hill without participating in it. The ford was on the right of the cover, and the only other chance of passing the stream was by a rustic bridge in the grounds of a gentleman at least two miles distant. Thus much is necessary to understand what took place on the day in question.

The hounds were no sooner in cover than they spoke to their fox : in a minute they were running him along the side of the hill, whilst the horsemen were halloed back to give him room to break. A fox is very timid or very bold ; on this occasion he was an incomprehensible anomaly, for, catching sight of the scarlet feather in Mrs. Thornhill's hat, whose coachman, to tell the truth, was a trifle too forward for real sport, but only bent upon getting the best start possible, Reynard turned short to the left, went straight down the hill, and in one moment was swimming the river at its deepest part. Now, I should have faced Mrs. Charles Thornhill with much better courage than the river.

The first along the road to pass the carriage was Charlie Thornhill ; and he was not long in turning short through the gate at the top of the cover, and galloping through it towards the point where he heard Will Goodchild's cheerful "Gone away !" As he emerged from the wood on the sloping meadows below, he saw the body of the pack stemming the current, and the leading hounds already dragging themselves up to the hollow banks, and shaking their sterns hastily before they settled to the scent. For a moment he contemplated swimming, but a recollection of the banks opposite deterred him : he had once been very nearly drowned in an attempt to do so. He turned, therefore, as quick as thought towards the ford. A quarter of a mile away he could just see the gate that led out of the meadow towards it,

and by which he knew the exact spot by which to hit it. "Not a soul with them," said he to himself. "What a pity! and such a scent in cover. By Jove! there is, though: and somebody who knows the country. How the deuce did he get there?" for at that moment a horseman emerged from the waters, and made straight for the only practicable place in the stiffest bullfinch in the country. Charlie watched him as he held on his own way, hopeless of catching and hopeful only of nicking them; while behind him thundered the field, a few of whom only contemplated the pleasing prospect of sticking to his skirts in hope of a place. "Well done!" said the Master. "Who is it, Thornhill? Don't override them, sir, whatever you do." He might as well have been hallooing to the sun at noon-day. They persevered as men will persevere, if anyone is fool enough to encourage, without seeing or hearing a hound, or even knowing in what direction they are running. They were not so hopelessly stranded as all that: the Master and Charlie kept on; the huntsman was a little to their left, slightly in advance, and Will Goodchild, having seen as many of his hounds out of cover as he thought orthodox, was in the thick of it. "There they go; look at the beauties; 'Gad! what a head they carry. We shall never catch them. And there's that man in the black coat; d—— it, how he's overriding them."

I don't think he was; but it was enough to make even a Master of Hounds swear. For a quarter of an hour they had been flying: a stern chase is proverbially a long one: the horses, a little short of condition after a frost, were beginning to feel it; and a few casualties had already taken place when they had so far overhauled them as to be within view of the hounds and the black-coated man, who continued to hold his own as very few men can. He was a tall, graceful man, with great power over his horse evidently, by the way in which he rode him. He swerved neither to the right nor the left, but sailed along (the pack quite under his command, whichever way they might turn). "It's Jim Mason," said one. "It's that confounded parson from Stickbury," said another. "No it's not; look at that fellow, he's a bigger man: besides, I think he has a beard." However, they were not more than two fields behind: one strong post and rails separated them: a nick would soon satisfy their curiosity. Their hopes rose. "He has a beard," the front rank men of the ruck can almost see it. At that moment the leading hounds headed short up to the right, and almost

before the field could acknowledge the turn, certainly before some of them could steady their horses, the hounds, the stranger, and all were over the brow of the hill, and had once more disappeared from sight.

In the meantime the carriage had been hunting the fox, as ladies will hunt him, against all hope. The coachman, too, was an enthusiast, and not a bad pilot. So they went down one lane and up another, over a piece of turf, and then through a farmyard—in fact, in the most mysterious holes and corners, now stopping to listen, then making a spurt, until they reached, in a roundabout manner, the ornamental bridge aforesaid. “If we don’t see ’em here, ma’am, we shan’t hear nothing of ’em again.” So Jehu pulled up, and sat still. He had been sitting, perhaps, five or six minutes, when he rose on his coach-box. At that moment he was joined by his master’s second horseman, who, seeing the impossibility of catching them by following over the ford, had come round by this bridge. “Ride on, Jim, and look if you can see anything of ’em.” Jim had been gone a minute, when he reappeared, and began beckoning to the coachman to come on. “They’re close here, running like blazes, and only one gent with ’em: it ain’t master, he’s got a black coat.” At that moment the hounds came down the grass field at the same pace, while the fence at the top opened, and crash through an ox-fence came the single horseman in close attendance. Down he came, with all his might, towards the gateway near to which the carriage was drawn up. He never raised his head nor checked his horse till he got close upon it; then he looked up, pulled his horse into a walk, and put out his crop to unhasp the gate leading towards the bridge and buildings by which they had come in.

Edith was not alone in the carriage. But she was standing up in her excitement and watching the hounds as they took the fence, crashing through the broken underwood with that dash which distinguishes a foxhound from all other animals. She suddenly heard her name sharply called by the beautiful girl who sat beside her, and looking down, she saw that every spark of colour had left her cheek.

“Edith, Edith, look; pray look, dearest!”

“Yes, yes: I see. Charming! beautiful! isn’t it? But where’s the field?”

“Did you see him? Tell me, did you? Surely you didn’t know of this?”

"See him. See what?—that horrid man with the beard, who seems to have had the best of it to-day? Charlie 'll be horridly savage, dear: it's the only thing that ever puts him out of temper."

"That was Tom Thornhill, Edith, if ever I saw him in my life."

"My darling child, he's in Alexandria. You're dreaming."

"No, dear, I'm not dreaming. That *is* Tom Thornhill."

"Alice!! Home, William, as fast as you can go."

You see Alice was not dead—never had been dead. Her aunt, godmother, and namesake was dead; which was but natural, seeing she was about seventy years of age, being very much older than her brother, Mr. Dacre of Gilsland. In fact, polite old women—and she was a polite old lady—feeling that they lose their good looks about that age, make a point of going. If Tom Thornhill's eyes had not been blinded by tears, or had he looked again the next day, he would have seen that this lady died in Bruton Street instead of at Florence or Gilsland.

They waited patiently enough; but neither mentioned his name. Two; three; four. At half-past four a step, an unmistakeable step, was heard upon the stairs; the door opened, and a much-damaged hat, very watery-looking boots, and a well-splashed scarlet coat entered. He stood a moment; his wife jumped up and ran towards him; but he shut the door, and placed his back against it.

"He's there, Charlie; I know he is," said the lively little woman, struggling in the arms of the giant.

"He! Who? What do you mean? Be quiet. Down, tigress; down."

"Who? Why, Tom. *My* brother Tom; he's my brother now. Let him come in. Tom, Tom!"

"He can't come in; he's covered with mud. Don't you see Alice is here?"

"Is he worse than you? You've been at the bottom of the Sludge. He shall come in."

Charlie stood on one side—the door opened—and there, once more in the full blaze of day, stood Tom Thornhill and Alice Dacre face to face. Charlie and his wife somehow suddenly disappeared.

Tom before very long was seen in town buying carriage-horses and furniture. He is as good a fellow as ever, and a better man. He has made a name for himself, a higher and

more honourable one than that which he destroyed. He has suffered, and others have suffered with him. Adversity has done for him what prosperity never did for any. Amidst all his regrets he has but one remaining—that he should ever have caused a pang to his Alice. She declares herself amply rewarded for it all. Tom has been known to speak with some vanity of that thirty minutes, to say nothing of its results. And, though University men have often heard of such things, I believe Tom Thornhill is the only man who ever rode a run entirely to the exclusion of the rest of the field.

Amidst all the wishes for the happiness of our beloved Prince and his Bride, which were showered upon the Royal Pair on the 10th March, 1863, there were none more sincere and few more large-hearted than the health that was drunk at Thornhills. “And Tom, old fellow,” said the Dunce of the Family, at the conclusion of a very uncommon burst of eloquence, “may he only be as happy as we are!”

THE END.

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